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© 1985 Donald Simpson

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NO JOKES, PLEASE!

Ah, the best-laid plans of mice and men...

Here I was, intent on doing a major April 1st issue of **AMAZING HEROES**—you know, full of jokes and merrymaking, and that kind of stuff—and circumstances insisted on punching great big holes in it.

For instance: I had several hilariously funny pieces lined up—things like an article revealing the fact that Neal Adams is actually Carl Barks working under a pseudonym, I mean, really outrageous stuff—and Walter Irwin sent in a historical article of such import and fascination I had no choice but to schedule immediately, hoping to get it into print before any of our competition got wind of it. I think you'll be amazed, too.

I was going to write a joke news column, as well, but just as we were ready to go to press, a series of astonishing events happened in the comic book industry, and my editorial assistant J. Collier and I agreed that we couldn't hold off on reporting them for the sake of a joke column. It's at times like this that I wish I could actually put out two different editions of **AH** just to get in all the material that I'd planned.

Then there was the Donald Simpson interview. When I was scheduling this issue four months ago, I looked around for goofy, silly stuff, and figured Megaton Man's creator would fit the bill. How was I to know that Donald is a serious, articulate, committed cartoonist, and that he'd rather talk about Henry Miller than Frank Miller?

(Which reminds me: Check out next issue for a grand, exclusive preview of Frank's upcoming projects for DC and Marvel, with page after page of exclusive art reproductions—pencilled and fully-inked Elektra pages, Batman character sketches, and more—as well as one of the hottest **AH** covers in recent memory!)

Anyway, it's a good interview, so I don't feel bad about it, but...

At least the Ambush Bug preview proved to be no letdown, as Keith Giffen and Robert Loren Fleming aided and abetted by interviewer Mark Waid, let loose with a barrage of insanity that fit perfectly into the now tattered theme of the issue. Special thanks to newly promoted Associate Art Director David G.C. Hamilton, who followed through on their hijinks with an adequately bizarre design for the article, and to Mr. Fleming himself, who actually sat down and wrote the "Ambush Bug" interview sidebar.

Of course, mucho thanks to the seemingly dozens of people involved in the cover, inventoried for your perusal at the bottom of the contents page.

There's no letters column this issue, because I had an idea for what I thought would be a really great joke, but by the time the deadlines rolled around, I had come to the grim conclusion that the joke wasn't funny, so I jettisoned the whole idea. Trust me: You wouldn't have liked it. Next issue, the letters column will be back, complete with Arthur Byron Cover's inimitable answers.

Talk to... never mind. —KIM

STAR HAWKS



STAR HAWKS



STAR HAWKS



NEWSFLASHES

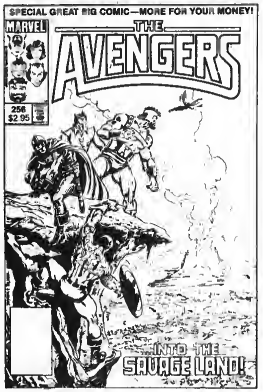
Because of a radical change in the pricing structure of World Color Press, which prints most of the newsprint comics published by Marvel and DC Comics, the 32-page comic will be a minority as of March 31, it was announced on February 29 of this year.

"World Color Press has gotten rid of its old printing presses," a spokesman for Marvel Comics explained, "and as a result, the price of printing a 32-page color comic has more than tripled."

Marvel Comics will be combating the problem by converting all of its existing titles into a 100-page format. Retailing for $2.95, these new comics will bear the headline "SPECIAL GREAT BIG COMIC—MORE FOR YOUR MONEY" across the top of each cover. The story content in each issue will total 65 pages, with 12 pages of ads and a 6-page letters column.

Although the first several months' worth of comics will contain material prepared for the old-format comics, editors and artists will soon begin to work within the parameters of the new format.

***Avengers* #256:** *The first 100-page, $2.95 issue.*



GIANT BYRNE AND MANTLO BOOKS: JOHN BYRNE, for instance, will be combining his ***Fantastic Four, Hulk, The Thing,*** and ***She-Hulk*** titles into **Fantastic Four and Co.,** whose only constant will be the 65 pages, all of which will be at least written and for the most part drawn by Byrne. "I'd be able to do a 35-page FF story, a 22-page She-Hulk story, a 14-page Hulk story, and write a 24-page Thing story, for example," Byrne said, "which would add up to 85 pages." Cross-overs and double-length stories teaming the characters will also become common.

BILL MANTLO, the writer of several series, has figured out a more radical way of dealing with the new format. All of his characters will band together into a "supergroup" of sorts, under the title ***The Revengers***. This will incorporate the Alpha Flight, Rom, Rocket Raccoon, Cloak and Dagger, and Sweshbuckler series. SAL BUSCEMA will drew and BUTCH GUICE will ink the book.

THE X-MEN: Other titles will be assembling features in a similar manner. CHRIS CLAREMONT will be in charge of ***The X-Men Super Giant Big Book***, which will include a regular 30-page X-Men series drawn by JOHN ROMITA, Jr. and DAN GREEN, a 25-page New Mutants series drawn by FRANK ROBBINS, and a rotating series of features starring other mutants.

NO MORE EDITORS: As a cost-cutting measure, Marvel will be firing its entire editorial staff except for HOWARD MACKIE, who will be in charge of coordinating the whole line under the continued editor-in-chiefship of JIM SHOOTER. Individual writers will be put in charge of their own titles. "Frankly, I think I'll have my hands full just trying to remember what's going where and to whom," Mackie told *Amazing Heroes*.

As a result, most of the editors have returned to freelancing—which is fortunate, since Marvel will cut its amount of titles by only half, resulting in an output of practically twice the amount of pages.

Although plans have not yet been finalized, some indications have been leaked to the press. MARK GRUENWALD will be expanding ***What If?*** to book-length sagas, and will be writing each issue. "If you think you've seen graphic novels," he explained, "you . . . well, you just haven't." LARRY HAMA will take over the new ***Conan the Barbarian King With Kuff the Conqueror,*** infusing a Jemaine element into R.E. Howard's barbarian. (Charlton vet SANHO KIM will drew the lead series.) DENNY O'NEIL is creating a new title called ***Creatures of the Night Starring Daredevil,*** which assembles DD, Moon Knight, and Power Men ("He's not really a creature of the night, but he's black," O'Neil explained) into one book. "I hope I can find a lot of people who drew like Neal Adams to drew it. They're all basically Batmen, to my way of thinking, anyway."

Spider-Man will keep his three regular new titles, ***Amazing, Spectacular,*** and ***Web Of,*** each one of which will feature regular 30-page lead stories. Back-ups will focus on individual characters such as J. Jonah Jameson ("Spidey's Fun-Loving Boss"), Betty Brant ("Peter Parker's Former Girlfriend"), Mary Jane Watson ("Another One of Peter Parker's Former Girlfriends"), Doctor Octopus ("Spidey's Deadly Nemesis"), and The Green Goblin ("Spidey's Dead Nemesis"). The Spectacular Spider-Kid will also get a regular slot in ***Amazing Spider-Man,*** and may later spin off into a regular slot in the ***Power Pack*** series.

DC: THE OTHER WAY: A spokesman for DC Comics labeled Marvel's decision "suicidal" and "the stupidest thing I've ever heard." As he pointed out, "we tried the same thing in the mid-'70s, and it sure as hell didn't work for us."

What DC will be doing instead is cutting down its comic books to 16 pages—"like *Cerebus*, just a step further." Ads will be cut down to 4 pages, leaving 14 pages of story per issue. Letters pages will be confined to the inside front cover, a la First Comics.

These new, 16-page comics will coat 66¢ rather than 75¢. "We didn't really feel we could charge the same amount of money for half the amount of story, Publisher JENETTE KAHN explained. "I realize 9 cents isn't much of a break, but where you used to be able to buy only seven comics, you can buy eight—that is, if you have another three cents, of course."

All of DC's comics will also be using the new Flexographic Process. However, they will avoid using the yellow color plate, since, according to Production Manager Bob Rozakis, "people have complained that the Flexographic-printed process tends to run colors off-register. By eliminating yellow, we'll be eliminating one-third of the problem. The comics look pretty good without the yellow, although we're going to have to change some of the costumes."

SMALLER TEAMS: One of the results of the change will be the reduction in the amount of members of most of the team books. "Let's face it," DICK GIORDANO said, "it's already tough enough fitting say, the Legion of Super-Heroes into one 25-page story." As a result, all teams will be cut down to three members. However, in order to keep the various members active, several new teams will be created. Robin, Cyborg, Wonder Girl, and Raven will form the core of ***The New Teen Titans,*** but the other three members will join into a new group called ***The Other New Teen Titans. The Legion of Super-Heroes*** will break off into ***The Legion of Super-Heroes*** and ***The Legion of Super-Heroines*** ("It's a little sexist, but it's the only way of keeping them straight," commented regular writer PAUL LEVITZ), with a third title covering ***The Legion of Substitute Heroes*** and a fourth ***Superboy and the Former Members of the Legion of Super-Heroes***. Each of these titles will continue to adopt the hard-cover/soft-cover plan, so there will be, all told, four ***Teen Titans*** and ten ***Legion of Super-Heroes*** titles on the stands every month. Asked for a list of who's doing what, GIORDANO replied "You've got to be kidding."

Justice League of America will reduce its membership to Vibe and Vixen, according to readership polls the favorite members of the audience. GERRY CONWAY will continue to write, and MIKE SEKOWSKY will drew.

THE STANDARD BEARERS: Supermen and Batman, DC Comics' flagship characters, will each be given seven titles. Superman will star in ***Superman, Action, Superman Adventure, The Adventures of Superman, Tales of Superman,*** and ***Superman: 1990*** (a series that will take place in the future). Batman will be featured in ***Batman, Detective, Batman Stories, Batman P.I.,*** and ***Tales of The Darknight Avenger***. (The seven title, of course, will be FRANK MILLER's Batman title tentatively titled ***Batman Vs. The Ninjas.***) Wonder Women will stick to her one bi-monthly title, although there are rumors of a GEORGE PEREZ mini-series, to be scripted by ROBERT KANIGHER.

AND THE ALTERNATIVES?: Reaction from the other comic book companies to the strange new format was, predictably enough, strong. Since most alternative publishers do not use the facilities of World Color Press, they are not constrained to follow the lead of Marvel and DC into these new formats. Some, however, did.

Deluxe Comics, for instance, will be expanding its line to a series of 150-page comic books, in order to keep one step ahead of the page counts from the majors. ("Fifty percent more pages has always been our motto," Publisher DAVE SINGER claimed.) There is as yet no indication as to where the publisher will find the manpower to fill these dozens of pages

SHOOTER COMMANDS-



EVERYONE DIES!

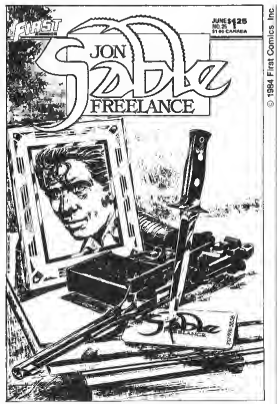
And he finds the perfect hit man to do the job.



FRED HEMBECK DESTROYS THE MARVEL UNIVERSE!!

MARVEL

48 death-dealing pages, $1.25. On sale in April wherever comics are sold.



© 1984 First Comics, Inc.

***Jon Sable**: Soon to become the first trans reciel comic book hero (if you ignore Iron Men and Green Lantern, thet is).*

e month, although there are rumors of a talant raid on Amaricomics, which hes stopped publication. (In fect, Americomics ceased publication in lata 1979, but no one has noticed, eccording to a paevish prass release from publisher BILL BLACK.)

At Aardvark-Vaneheim, DAVE SIM will cut ***Cerebus tha Aardvark*** back to eight pages an issue, beginning with tha #78th issue. The book will, however, go weakly beginning in early April. "It will be sort of like a Sunday funnies section with only one funny," Sim explained it to ***AH***. The cover price will be a very reasonebla 45¢ (65¢ in Canada). In view of this formet adjustment, Sim has abandoned his plans to continua ***Cerebus tha Aardvark*** for 300 issuas, and will now take 984 issues (1,231 in Canada) to chronicle the lifa of his aardvark.

Fantagraphics Books will combina all of its titles into ona 64-page titla, ***Fantegraphics Books' Hiddan Wers***, which will be written by Publisher/Editor-in-Chief GARY GROTH. "Let's face it," Groth commantad, "wa've got soma pratty talanted writers working, but obviously no ona is going to undarstand what makes Dalgode, or Errata Stigmata, or Wolverine MacAlistaire click bettar then me." MILTON KNIGHT, Jr. will be drawing the entire series, while JAIME and GILBERT HERNANDEZ, BILL LOEBS, DENNIS FUJITAKE, and KEVIN NOWLAN will ink their respective characters. The story takes place during a cross-country trak from Connecticut to California, and several mejor characters will die when a Fantagraphics editor runs them ovar with a truck.

First Comics plans to ignora the entire deal and continue eheed with its line of comics unchenged. "Face it," Editor-in-Chief MIKE GOLD said, "this entire news column is just an elaborate hoax, so why should wa in any way base any of our policies on it?" In non-related First Comics news, however, Gold did admit that ***Jon Sable*** wes going to undergo a brain transplant into the body of a bleck men who "looks remarkably like Eddie Murphy. Go figure," Gold shrugged anigmatically.

Eclipse Comics plans to adopt Marvel's 100-paga format for ***Sabre*** which will faatura 93 story pages of tha hero eating, changing his baby's diapers, and having sex. Writer DON McGREGOR, when epprised of the change, sighed and said "I just wish I had a *little* more room, man, I feel constrained by this format." According to the latest report, ha is currently negotiating for e 200-paga format.

Eclipse's ***DNAgents*** will go to 108 pages, most of which will be taken up by nude pin-ups ("Tasteful, though," aditor CAT YRONWODE statad) of tha famala charactars. LARRY MARDER will take over tha ragular pancilling on the lead series, still inked by WILLIE BLYBERG. ("I don't think enyone will notica tha differance," writer MARK EVANIER said.)

All of the changes will be explained in mora detail in tha ***1985 Summar Previaw Isaue*** of ***Amezing Haroes***. Or, possibly, not.

That's it. You can stop reading now. Did I have you going for a while thare?



© 1985 Gilbert Hernandez



Coming DISTRACTIONS

MARCH 16-31

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM

☐ **FLAMING CARROT #6**
Story/Art/Cover.... **Bob Burden**
[$1.70 direct sales black-and white comic, ships 3/30]

☐ **MS. TREE #18**
"Runaway"
Focusing on Ms. Tree's stepson, Mike Tree.
Story.... **Mex Allen Collins**
Art/Cover.... **Beetty & Kete**
[$1.70 direct sales two-color comic, ships 3/30]

DC COMICS

☐ **ACTION COMICS #568**
A high school prank unleashes a Lois Lane monster!
Story.... **D. Yee**
Art.... **Irv Novick**
Plus a second story by **Wolff and Bender**
[75¢ color comic, ships 4/2, newsstand o/s 4/25]

☐ **ALL-STAR SQUADRON #47**
The origin of Dr. Fate—and more!
Story.... **Roy Thomas**
Art.... **McFarlane & Marcos**
Cover.... **Todd McFarlane**
[75¢ color comic, ships 4/2, newsstand o/s 4/25]

☐ **AMBUSH BUG #2**
A cute koala bear turns into a towering menace. Also, golf.
Story.... **Giffen & Fleming**
Art/Cover.... **Giffen & Okeer**
[75¢ color comic, ships 4/2, newsstand o/s 4/25]

☐ **ARION, LORD OF ATLANTIS #33**
Arion fights his evil mother in a battle to the death.
Story.... **Paul Kupperberg**
Art/Cover.... **Jan Duursema**
[75¢ color comic, ships 4/2, newsstand o/s 4/25]

☐ **BATMAN AND THE OUTSIDERS #23**
Concluding Helo's origin
Story.... **Mike W. Barr**
Art/Cover.... **Alan Davis**
[75¢ color comic, ships 3/26, newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **BLUE DEVIL #14**
Introducing Kid Devil.
Story.... **Mishkin & Cohn**
Art.... **Kupperberg & Martin**
Cover.... **Cuffins & Martin**
[75¢ color comic, ships 3/26, newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **DETECTIVE COMICS #552**
Story.... **Doug Moench**
Art.... **Broderick & Smith**
Cover.... **Pat Broderick**
[75¢ color comic, ships 4/2, newsstand o/s 4/25]

☐ **G.I. COMBAT #278**
"The Waiting Graves"
Story.... **Robert Kenigher**
Art.... **Sam Glanzman**
Plus other stories of war and fighting men
Cover.... **Joe Kubert**
[$1.25 48-page color comic, ships 3/19, newsstand o/s 4/11]

☐ **GREEN LANTERN #190**
The race is on to find the origin of the Predetor
Story.... **Steve Englehart**
Art/Cover.... **Staton & Patterson**
[75¢ color comic, ships 3/26, newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **INFINITY, INC. #16**
The dealy secret of Mr. Bones
Story.... **Roy Thomas**
Art/Cover.... **Clark & DeZuniga**
[$1.25 direct-sales color comic, ships 3/26]

☐ **NEW TEEN TITANS #10**
The secret of the new Titan Kole!
Story.... **Marv Wolfman**
Art.... **Gercia Lopez & Tanghel**
Cover.... **Ed Barreto**
[$1.25 direct sales color comic, ships 3/26]

☐ **PREZ MINI-SERIES #4**
The conclusion of the new chapter in Prez's life, as he kills the entire Democratic party.
Story.... **Jerry Siegel**
Art.... **Jaime Hernandez**
Cover.... **Charles Schulz**
[75¢ color comic, ships 4/1, newsstand o/s 4/1, too Amazing, huh?]

☐ **SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING #38**
The beginning of the 'American Gothic' series
Story.... **Alan Moore**
Art.... **Veitch & Totleben**
Cover.... **Bissette & Totleben**
[75¢ color comic, ships 3/26, newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **SGT. ROCK #402**
Story.... **Robert Kenigher**
Art.... **Frenk Redondo**
Cover.... **Joe Kubert**
[75¢ color comic, ships 3/26, newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **SWORD OF THE ATOM SPECIAL #2**
Further adventures of the new Atom in the South American jungles.
Story.... **Jon Stmed**
Art/Cover.... **Gil Kane**
[$1.25, 48-page color comic, ships 4/2, newsstand o/s 4/23]

☐ **TALES OF THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #325**
Is the Dark Circle made up of only five beings?
Story.... **Paul Levitz**
Art/Cover.... **Jurgens & Keeel**
[75¢ color comic, ships 4/2, newsstand o/s 4/23]

☐ **V #6**
The rebels take a dengerous risk.
Story.... **Cary Bates**
Art.... **Infantino & DeZuniga**
Cover.... **Eduerdo Berreto**
[75¢ color comic, ships 4/2, newsstand o/s 5/2]

☐ **WARLORD #95**
Morgen comes across a strange-looking steed.
Story.... **Cary Burkett**
Art.... **A. Kubert & B. Smith**
Cover.... **Rich Buckler**
[75¢ color comic, ships 3/26, newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **WHO'S WHO: THE DEFINITIVE DIRECTORY OF THE DC UNIVERSE #5**
Cyborg, Cosmic Boy, The Creeper, and more.
Editor.... **Len Wein**
[$1.00 color comic, ships 3/27, newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **WONDER WOMAN #328**
WW in a Central American civil war.
Story.... **Mindy Newell**
Art.... **Don Heck**
[75¢ color comic, ships 4/6, newsstand o/s 5/2]

EAGLE COMICS

☐ **JUDGE DREDD #21**
Vast areas of Mega-City One have been annihilated by Soviet nuclear warheads in this book-length story.
Story.... **John Wagner**
Art.... **Carlos Ezquerre**
Cover.... **Brian Bolland**
[$1.00 direct sales Mando color comic, ships 3/27]

ECLIPSE COMICS

☐ **CROSSFIRE #10**
"Cadaver Goes to Hollywood"
Story **Mark Evanier**
Art/Cover **Dan Spiegle**
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/2]

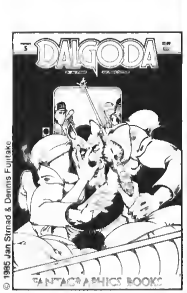
☐ **DNAGENTS #20**
Story **Merk Evanier**
Art **Howell & Blyberg**
Cover **Meugniot & Blyeberg**
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/19]

☐ **NIGHT MUSIC #3**
All by **P. Craig Russell**
[$1.75 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/26]

☐ **PRESSBUTTON #4**
The dramatic confrontation between Mysta Mystralis and Donthax.
Story **Pedro Henry**
Art **Steve Dillon**
Plus a "Zirk, the Silver Sweater of the Spaceways" story by **Henry** and **Gerry Leech** and a six-page adventure of Ektryn by **Henry** and **Cem Keenedy**
[$1.75 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/26]

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

☐ **DALGODA #5**
Dalgoda Come Home, Part One"
The only other Canidan on Earth is killed, a conspiracy is uncovered, and the decision!
Story **Jon Strnad**
Art/Cover **Dennis Fujitake**
"Grimwood's Daughter"
Grimwood castle falls to the humans
Story **Jon Strnad**
Art/Back Cover **Kevin Nowlan**



© 1985 Jon Strnad & Dennis Fujitake

Colors **Kenneth Smith**
[$2.00 full-color direct-sales comic; ships 3/27]

☐ **SAGA OF IT'S A POTATO #3**
The latest installment of the deluxe title featuring the famous character.
Story **Cerebwiner Phillips**
Art **J. Collier**
Cover **Gil Jordan**
[$3.95 color comic; ships 4/1; newsstand o/s same day]

FIRST COMICS

☐ **AMERICAN FLAGG! #22**
Blackmail & White Trash: Bullets and Ballots, Part 3"
The truth behind the blackmail campaign, and a new mayor for Chicago!
All by **Howard Cheykin**
Plus: "Luther Ironheart"
Story **Alan Moore**
Art **Larry Stromen**
[$1.25 direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 3/21]

☐ **JON SABLE, FREELANCE #26**
"Homecoming, Part 2"
Sable learns more about his parents than he wants to know.
Story/Art/Cover **Mike Grell**
Plus: **"Shelter"**
Story **Peter Gillis**
Art **Mike Saenz**
[$1.25 direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 3/26]

☐ **STARSLAYER #30**
"Monsters, Conclusion"
The D'Orsinis launch an attack to reclaim their starship.
Story **John Ostrender**
Art/Cover **Berte & Nelson**
Black Flame: "The Strange High House in the Mist"
Story **Peter Gillis**
Art **Sutton & Lemex**
[$1.25 direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 3/21]

HARRIER

☐ **SWIFTSURE #1**
"Codename: Andromeda"
A 25 th century super-heroine who is given her powers when her spacecraft explodes.
Story **Bill W. Ryan**
Art **Dave Herwood**
"Ram, Assassin"
A young member of the Guild of Assassins dishes out law in a Terran-settled world.
Story **Martin Lock**
Art **O'Reake & Heppeard**
"Dendy in the Underworld"
A playboy-about-town is banished to the lower depths of the city.
Story/Art **Stephen Beakerville**



© 1985 Harrier Comics

"Lieutenant Fl'ff"
Featuring the character from *Conqueror* in her own series.
Story **Martin Lock**
Art **Mark Fermer**
Cover **Bryan Talbot**
[$1.75 black and white direct-sales comic; ships March]

MANUSCRIPT

☐ **COMICS REVIEW #10**
Over 50 pages of current comic strips, including *Spider-Man, Gasoline Alley, Bloom County, Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, Flash Gordon, Secret Agent Corrigan* and *O'Neill*. Plus, beginning a new *Latigo* episode.
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships March]

MARVEL COMICS

☐ **AVENGERS #257**
Ka-Zar and Shanna guest star, end Terminus is featured
Story **Roger Stern**
Art/Coverd. **Buscema & Palmer**
[65¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/7]

☐ **CONAN THE BARBARIAN #172**
"Reavers of the Outland"
Story **Jim Owsley**
Art/Cover **John Buscema**
Inks **Bob Camp**
[60¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/7]

☐ **THE DEFENDERS #145**
Story **Peter Gillis**
Art **Perlin & Nichola**
[65¢ color comic; ships 3/26; newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **DR. WHO #10**
"War of the Worlds"
Story **Steve Moore**
Art/Cover **Dave Gibbons**
"The Deal"
Story **Steve Parkhouse**
Art **Dave Gibbons**
"Ship of Fools" and "Twilight of the Silurians"
Story **Steve Moore**
Art **Steve Dillon**
[$1.50 Baxter color comic; ships 2/26]

☐ **FANTASTIC FOUR #280**
The new Hatemonger is the villeins.
Story/Art/Cover **John Byrne**
Inks **Jerry Ordway**
[65¢ color comic; ships 3/26; newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **FRED HEMBECK DESTROYS THE MARVEL UNIVERSE**
Story/Art **Fred Hembeck**
Inks **Vince Colletta**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 3/26; newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **G.I. JOE #37**
"Twin Brothers"
Story **Larry Heme**
Art **Sprieger & Mushynsky**
Cover **Zeck & Beatty**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/5]

☐ **INCREDIBLE HULK #309**
Hulk encounters three different aspects of himself
Story **Bill Mantlo**
Art **S. Buscema & Teleoc**
Cover **Mike Mignola**
[65¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/9]

☐ **IRON MAN #196**
Guest starring Hawkeye, as Stark goes into battle with incomplete armor.
Story **Denny O'Neill**
Art **Buckler & Akin/Garvey**
[65¢ color comic; ships 3/26; newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **MARVEL FANFARE #21**
The conclusion of the Think/Hulk clash.
Story/Art **Jim Starlin**
Inks **Al Milgrom**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/11]

☐ **MARVEL TALES #177**
"Just a Guy Named Joe"
Reprinting Spider-Man #38.
Story **Stae Lee**
Art/Cover **Steve Ditko**
[65¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/5]

☐ **MOON KNIGHT #2**
The first mission of the brand new Moon Knight.
Story **Alee Zelenetz**
Art/Cover **Wamer & Cruz**
[65¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/5]

☐ **PETER PARKER, SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #104**
Story **Bill Mantlo**
Art **McDonnell & Breeding**
Cover **Bill Sienkiewicz**
[65¢ color comic; ships 3/26; newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **POWER MAN/IRON FIST #118**
The return to K'un L'un
Story **Jim Owsley**
Art/Cover **Bright & Acemo**
[65¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/9]

☐ **ROCKET RACCOON #3**
The dreaded Banana Bombs, and more.
Story **Bill Mantlo**
Art **Mignola & Milgrom**
Cover **Mignola & Gordon**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/26; newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **ROM: SPACEKNIGHT #58**
Rom is torn between his human end cyborg halves.
Story **Bill Mantlo**
Art **Ditko & Breeding**
Cover **Brett Breeding**
[65¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/9]

☐ **SECRET WARS II #1**
Guest starring the X-Man, the New Mutants, and more
Story **Jim Shooter**
Art **Milgrom & Leialoha**
Cover **Byrne & Austin**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/26; newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **SPIDER-MAN INDEX #4**
Compiled by **George Olshevsky**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 3/26; newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **STAR WARS #97**
Story **Jo Duffy**
Art/Cover **Cynthie Martin**
Inks **Bob Wiacek**
[65¢ color comic; ships 3/26; newsstand o/s 4/16]



© 1985 Marvel Comics Group

☐ **THOR #357**
Beginning a quest for a new leader for Asgard.
All by **Walt Simonson**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/26; newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **TRANSFORMERS #6**
Story **Bob Budiewsky**
Art **Alen Kupperberg**
Cover **Mark Bright**
[60¢ color comic; ships 3/26; newsstand o/s 4/16]

☐ **X-MEN #195**
Power Pack guest stars.
Story **Chris Claremont**
Art/Cover **Romita Jr. & Green**
[65¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/5]

MARVEL EPIC COMICS

☐ **COYOTE #12**
Story **Steve Englehart**
Art/Cover **Truog & Springer**
Plus a back-up story drawn by **MacFarlane** and **Nicholas**.
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/26]

☐ **EPIC ILLUSTRATED #30**
Includes "The Last Galactus Story" by **Byrne** and **Austin**, two **Dave Sim** Cerebus stories, "Cobalt 60" continued, and more.
Cover **Berni Wrightson**
[$3.50 full-color magazine; ships 3/26; newsstand o/s 4/16]

MARVEL STAR COMICS

☐ **GET ALONG GANG #2**
Story **Dave Manak**
Art **Gerzone & Roettcher**
Cover **Warren Kremer**
[60¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/9]

☐ **MUPPET BABIES #2**
The Muppet Babies take a trip through space.
Story **Sten Key**
Art/Cover **Merle Severin**
[60¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/9]

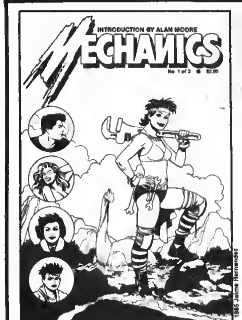
☐ **ROYAL ROY #2**
Story **Lennie Hermen**
Pencils/Cover **Warren Kremer**
Inks **Jon D'Agostino**
[65¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/9]

WaRP GRAPHICS

☐ **A DISTANT SOIL #5**
Story/Art/Cover **Colleen Doran**
Script **Richard Pini**
[$1.50 black-and-white direct-sales magazine; ships 3/20]

Coming in MAY From

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS™



Finally! Jaime Hernandez's Mechanics . . . in Full Color!

This month sees the first issue of JAIME HERNANDEZ's beloved ***Mechanics*** as a full-color comic. The three-issue mini-series will reprise the exciting 40-page "Mechanics" story from the cult-hit print and hard-to-find *Love and Rockets #2* with brand new stories, covers, and artwork comprising over a third of the series!

In the first issue, we re-present the first three chapters of "Mechanics," plus a brand new 8-page Penny Century story done especially for this issue.

The entire series is being colored using the full-process system, by PAUL RIVOCHE, who colored *Mr. X #1* so beautifully.

RETAILERS: If you love Love and Rockets, this is your chance to introduce the L&R work to fans who prefer color comic books to black-and-white magazines. Bear in mind JAIME's growing popularity among fans and non-fans . . . consider Fantagraphics Books' state-of-the-art coloring and production values . . . look at the phenomenal retail bag campaign we're preparing . . . and order high on this future collector's item!

*NOTE: **Mechanics** will carry a "Recommended for Mature Readers" advisory.*



Mechanics Mini-Series #1. 36 pages. Full color. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in May. $2.00. (Canada: $2.50).

PREVIEW ISSUE

By Popular Demand! AH Preview Special #1

In 1983, the ***Amazing Heroes Preview Issue*** had to be reprinted in order to meet distributor and retailer demand. In 1984, more than 20,000 copies of the Preview issue rolled off the presses just to meet initial orders.

Now, we proudly introduce the twice-a-year ***Amazing Heroes Preview Special #1***—a refinement of the concept that has become a staple in the comics industry. The increased frequency allows for more up-to-date coverage of the entire range of upcoming comics—plus special information about this summer's conventions. And the cover is by **Zot!**'s brilliant SCOTT McCLOUD!

As always, we'll have extensive previews of every title planned or currently on the stands (over 250!) with lots of exclusive artwork and quotations from everyone. We have yet to hear of a dealer who overstocked on an ***Amazing Heroes Preview Issue***.

Amazing Heroes Preview Special #1. 148 pages. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in May. $3.95. (Canada: $4.55).



Arn Saba Speaks In COMICS JOURNAL #99

Neil the Horse creator ARN SABA highlights ***THE COMICS JOURNAL #99*** with a revealing full-length interview. DALE LUCIANO e "Newave Comics Survey" continues. HEIDI MacDONALD wonders, "Why the X-Men Don't Work?" MILTON KNIGHT, Jr. creator of *Hugo* contributes an article about the comics market. Ethics and the comics industry is examined in a behind the scenes feature by insider SCOTT EDELMAN. Visit Archie Andrews a stomping grounds again in "Riverdale Revisited." The usual complement of letters, reviews, a GARY GROTH editorial, and an in-depth news section round off the issue. ***Journal #99*** features a compositive cover starring Archie, Neil, and the Uncanny X-Men.

The Comics Journal #99. 100 pages. Published by The Comics Journal Inc. Shipping in May. $2.95. (Canada: $3.75).

Retail Bags Available For a Penny!

As part of our ongoing effort to help retailers sell our publications, **Fantagraphics Books** is making plastic retail bags available to comic shops during May 1985. Each bag, selling for only a penny apiece, will display both an original ***Dalgoda*** illustration by DENNIS FUJITAKE and a detail from the cover to ***Mechanics #1*** by JAIME HERNANDEZ.

Last summer, **Fantagraphics Books** conducted an experimental retail bag promotion to coincide with the release of ***Dalgoda #1***. Response to that experiment was phenomenal. In just a few short weeks, **Fantagraphics Books** distributed over 110,000 bags. Retailers reported that carrying the bags made a significant contribution to their high sales on ***Dalgoda***.

The overwhelming response to that experimental promotion has prompted Fanta graphics Books to expand the availability of the retail bags. By offering them for a minimal price and selling them with the cooperation of comic book distributors. The sale of the bags is essentially a co-op advertising arrangement because the money that **Fantagraphics Books** gets will not approach covering the costs of printing and distributing the bags.

If you haven't yet ordered bags from your distributor, please hurry! In addition to providing you with inexpensive, handsome bags to pack your customers purchases, this will help you promote two high profit items in your store: ***Mechanics*** and ***Dalgoda***.

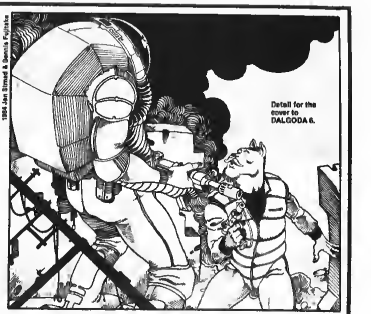
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DALGODA Stories Climax: Dalgoda Returns to Canida; "Grimwood" Ends

DALGODA #6 "Dalgoda Come Home, Part Two." Dal and his reluctant crew return to Dal's home planet and find . . . what? A shocking surprise ending that will spin off the series into an entirely new direction! By JAN STRNAD, DENNIS FUJITAKE and KEN SMITH.

Also, "Grimwood's Daughter" reaches a tragic conclusion that brings this back-up series to an end. By JAN STRNAD, KEVIN NOWLAN, and KEN SMITH. (Beginning in ***Dalgoda #7***. A new back-up series from one of the hottest stars of the decade—but we can't say any more for now!!)

*NOTE: During the month of May, **Dalgoda** will be supported by retailer bag campaign that we expect will reach literally hundreds of thousands of readers. Look at how your back issues are selling out as the popularity of the series grows . . . look at Fantagraphics Books' powerful promotional efforts . . . look at the astonishing production values on recent issues . . . and adjust your order accordingly! You'll be glad you did!*

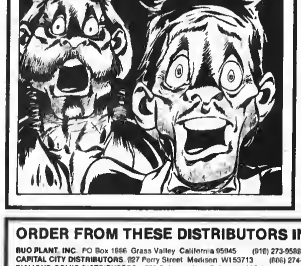


Dalgoda #6. 36 pages. Full color. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in May. $2.00. (Canada: $2.50).

New Arrivals in JOURNEY

JOURNEY #20. Introductions are in order as poet Elmer Allyn Kraft and Wolverine MacAlistaire arrive in New Hope. Meet settlement founder Drummond Wright, see some ice loaded into the icehouse and find out why so many pioneer women were burned to death! Written and drawn by WILLIAM MESSNER-LOEBS. Still on white paper!

Journey #20. 36 pages. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in early May. $2.00. (Canada: $2.50).



Marvel Double Feature in AH #72-73!

As the summer approaches Marvel will be releasing a plethora of surefire hit titles, and **AN** is there to cover them!

AMAZING HEROES #72. STEVE ENGLEHART returns to Marvel super-heroes in a big way with his two intertwined series, ***Hawkeye and Ike West Coast Avengers*** and ***Vision/Scarlet Witch***—and **AH** is there to grill him on the subject! Special cover by ***Vision/Scarlet Witch*** star artist RICHARD HOWELL!

AMAZING HEROES #73. JACK KIRBY's ***Eternals*** was one of the most different series of the '70s. Now it's being revived by PETER GILLIS, SAL BUSCEMA, and AL GORDON, and **AH** is PETER SANDERSON is there to cover it! With a new cover by BUSCEMA and GOFI DON!

Both issues feature the "Golden Age Directory" (continuing in #73), superhero histories, news, reviews, letters, and more.

Amazing Heroes #72. 68 pages. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in early May. $1.95. (Canada: $2.50).

Amazing Heroes #73. 68 pages. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in late May. $1.95. (Canada: $2.50).



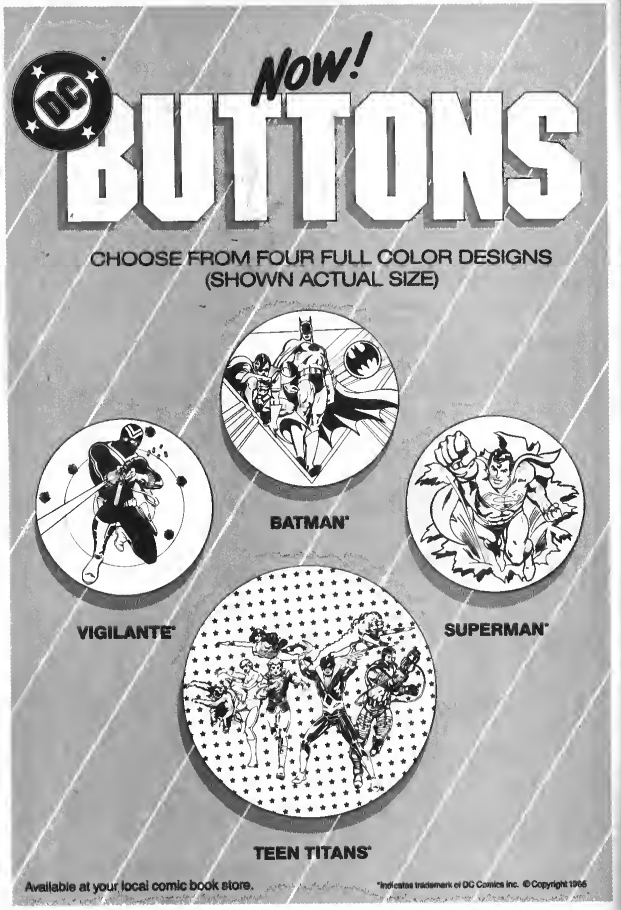
Sal Buscema pencil art for THE ETERNALS.

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- ★ *Amazing Heroes #74*
- ★ *Amazing Heroes #75*



BUGGED!

Not A Preview Of The AMBUSH BUG Mini-Series.

"What's this bug stuff?" —JONATHAN WINTERS, *in* It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World.

This is a test. For the next four months, Keith Giffen and Robert Loren Fleming, in conjunction with your local retailer, will be conducting a test of the Ambush Bug's Regular Series Marketability. If this is really humorous, you will be instructed to add another regular title to your buying list. This is only a test.



Art on pages 21-26 © 1985 DC Comics, Inc., except where indicated

No Subhead

"The Ambush Bug was originally a throwaway character," says Keith Giffen, creator, plotter and penciller behind the arthropoidic avenger. "Julie Schwartz asked me to do an issue of *DC Presents* with Paul Kupperberg, featuring the new Doom Patrol. I was in the middle of the Legion then, and jumped at the chance to draw anything with less than 50 people in it. We were trying to come up with a villain to use, and Julie said, 'Does anyone have a character just sitting there in the back of their mind?' Giffen suggested the Ambush Bug, a "villain" with the ability to teleport in and out of Superman's grasp, wreak all kinds of havok wherever he went, and generally, make Mr. Meyzptlk look like a responsible citizen in comparison. Giffen was given the go-ahead. Then the mail came in—50 per cent raving about the Bug. A second outing was scheduled, another *DC Presents* featuring Ambush Bug (with supporting characters Superman and the Substitute Legion)—and the fan mail on that issue beat out Superman's. "It began to dawn on me that I had something. He appeared in *Supergirl*" (obviously the idea of Ambush Bug thinking that Supergirl was just Superman pulling a Frank-N-Furter was too good to pass up), "and when the mail started coming in on that, I began to look around for a vehicle for the character."

Fortunately, Schwartz was then looking around for backup features for *Action*, and gave the Bug a berth, where Giffen snagged Robert Loren Fleming, late of *Thriller*, to handle the actual scripting chores. "I knew Bob back when he was a proofreader for the company. I always liked the rhythm he had to his dialogue in *Thriller*, and the fact that he didn't spell everything out. And we both have the same sense of humor—the kind that makes Julie really nervous."

And then the ball game went big leagues. "When I left the Legion, Dick Giordano said, 'What do you want to do?' I figured I'd ask for something I'd never get, so I could bargain him down to what I wanted. I wanted *Thriller*, so I asked for *Ambush Bug*—and he gave it to me instantly." Maybe not the most cricket way to negotiate, but thus was born a comic book.

by Mark Waid

The X-Men

"With the mini-series," says Giffen, "I'm really pushing it to see how far I can go until somebody clamps down on me. The first issue has the bug up against Republican Terrorists holed up in a warehouse—the wrong warehouse, it turns out—and introduces his sidekick, Cheeks, the Toy Wonder. In the middle of the book, we interrupt the story for a special insert with things like 'The Ambush Bug Merchandising Catalog' and 'The Ambush Bug Fitness and Aerobics Book.' With no explanation.

"The second issue is 'Quantis,' the Koala that Walks like a Man (Awww. Cute!). We interrupt twice for PGA coverage. See, I think lots of comics fans have a certain complacency in what they read, where they're actually just skimming over the stories. That's one of the reasons I started butting panels together, to eliminate that skim factor, forcing you to sit down and really read this.

"The third issue features 'The Ambush Bug History of the DC Universe,' or 'The Continuity Game.' When Marv and Len tried to straighten out the DC Universe [for *Crisis on Infinite Earths*], they had to sweep a lot of characters under the rug to fit the universe. I'm not a big continuity buff. I don't care whether the Flash's boots have ridged soles or straight soles, I don't care whether Superman, Superboy and Superbaby have all responded to President Kennedy's call." Or, as Fleming puts it, "On the cover of that issue, there's a disclaimer that says 'In this comic we intentionally put in 73 continuity errors.' The first reader to write in and list them all will earn our undying contempt."

"If the story's good, interesting, and it works," continues Giffen, "then do it. Sure, maintain a little respect for the character—that '60s story that claimed that a little elf named Mopee was responsible for the Flash's origin is a bit much, but that guy gets his comeuppance in the third issue of *Ambush Bug* anyway, when we prove conclusively that Mopee is responsible for everyone's origin. Anyway, there's so many of these weird characters that DC's done that are probably going to get swept away, like Bat-Mite and Binky, that the issue alternates between pages of the bug interviewing these characters, and pages of profiles of these guys that people have either forgotten or wish desperately to forget. We introduce Jonni DC, sister of the old

THE AMBUSH INTERVIEW

by Robert Loren Fleming



AMBUSH ON COMICS

AH: *Who are your favorite writers?*

Bug: Marv Wolfman, Frank Miller, Chris Claremont and Sidney Sheldon.

AH: *Any favorite artists?*

Bug: No. I just read the captions and balloons and *skip* the *visuals*.

AH: *How about editors at DC Comics?*

Bug: How about 'em?

AH: *Do you own any original art?*

Bug: No, just some of Keith's stuff.

AH: *How did Robert Loren Fleming come to dialogue your adventures?*

Bug: On his hands and knees.

AH: *Do you own any complete collections?*

Bug: Yes I do! I have every one of the Flintstones glasses in the Burger King edition.

AH: *Do you remember the time the Seven Elevens gave away Marvel Slurpee Cups?*

Bug: No, do you?

AMBUSH ON POLITICS

AH: *Are you liberal or conservative?*

Bug: I swing both ways, but that doesn't mean I'll go out with you tonight.

AH: *Can you be serious?*

Bug: Not so far.

AH: *Which way did you vote in the last election?*

Bug: Thataway.

AMBUSH ON SEX

Bug: I thought we covered this back in politics.

AH: *Do you have human sexual organs?*

Bug: Yes, except when I'm under *extreme duress*.

AH: *What happens then?*

Bug: Well, you know how the Hulk tears out of all of his shirts and pants?

AH: *Yes. So?*

Bug: For me, shirts are no problem.

AH: *Are you saying that you're a sexual Superman?*

Bug: No, but I would say that *Superman* is an asexual *Ambush Bug*.

AH: *Have you ever been married?*

Bug: No, but I did try one of those video dating services once.

AH: *What happened?*

Bug: Armageddon, baby.

AMBUSH ON AMAZING HEROES

AH: *How does it feel to be in the latest issue of* **AMAZING HEROES**?

Bug: Fleeting!

AH: *Have you ever read the magazine before?*

Bug: Yes. I particularly enjoyed the recent letters by Roy Thomas.

AH: *Have there been any recent letters by Roy Thomas?*

Bug: No. That's what I particularly enjoyed.

AH: *Which past issue of* **AMAZING HEROES** was your favorite?

Bug: My favorite? Hoo-boy. Uhhh.... the.... the *X-Men* issue!

AH: *Which one?*

Bug: Uh-oh. Well.... the.... *Wolverine* issue. Yeah! The WOLVERINE issue!

AH: *Which one?*

Bug: Hey. I liked 'em all, okay?

AH: *What made you decide to do this interview?*

Bug: Sorry. Mark old chum, but I did it for da cash.

AH: *But didn't Kim tell you that we don't pay for interviews, Ambush?*

AH: *Ambush?*



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Two little-known relatives of the scripter of AMBUSH BUG: Reid Fleming (left) and the Fleming Carrot

OUTTAKES #1

Giffen: Kim said that he cut the six-page entry you promised us for the 1985 Preview Issue down to three paragraphs since we were getting our own issue of **AMAZING HEROES**.

AH: *What?? The fiend.... I wanted media blitz coverage.*

Fleming: Well, I guess that says something about Mark's clout, doesn't it?

OUTTAKES #2

Giffen: One of the things that's frustrating to Julie, and I'm sure it must be frustrating to Bob, is that we'll sit down in Julie's office and say 'this, this and this will be in the next issue,' and then when Bob gets the pages, it's not there! When I sat down at the drawing board, it all takes on a life of its own. In other words, I just launch forwards and see how far I can push a concept before I go beyond the bounds of reader comprehension.

Fleming: I know I didn't understand a lot of it.

OUTTAKES #3

AH: Bob, is it true you're trying to resuscitate your dying career by riding the coattails of superstar Keith Giffen?

Fleming: No. I'm trying to resuccitate my dying career by writing *Justice League* Which-Way books for DC.

OUTTAKES #4

AH: *What all did you guys have to throw out?*

Fleming: Originally, when Scabbard left, it was going to be a real to-do. We were going to have him pull the page down, feel it, taste it, and say, "Hey, this isn't Baxter paper!" And to compliment the Bugs Bunny roots of the Bug, we were going to have our own Tasmanian Devil, Derwood Denton, the psychiatrist, was going to have a wimpy little nephew named Dervish who turned into.

AH: *Whirling Dervish. Good Lord.*

OUTTAKES #5

Giffen: The Bug is a true innocent. He was raised by the television, so he has no cynicism in him at all. Even when he gets that sarcastic attitude for a line or two, like standing in a McDonalds and ordering a Big Mac, hold the beef, you can look at him and examine that look on his face that says that he thinks he's pulling something off on somebody.

Fleming: I though that was just the way he liked them. *(laughter)* That's the way I eat them. *(Hysterics.)*

OUTTAKES #6

Giffen: I don't care if the book doesn't sell at all, I'm just so glad I got a chance to do it. If it bombs, I can always go on to other things.

Fleming: It'll probably pull my fat out of the fire, after *Thriller* and my Which-Way books *(laughter)*.

AH: *Not to mention* FlashForce 2000.

Fleming: Oh, please don't mention *FlashForce 2000*....

Giffen: Bob's resume reads like the plans for Hiroshima during the war....

1960s DC mascot. "She's the cosmic keeper to the DC Continuity. She gets smacked around a lot.

"We also went for a real feel towards the old DC comics. The thing I remember most about those old books are things like cutting out the coupons for Palisades Park and riding the Caterpillar for free and the Tootsie Pop optical illusions and the Henry Boltinoff cartoons—and we included all of that. We start that issue off with a Science Fact page saying, 'This is a red sun, this is a yellow sun. If a man were to come from a planet circling a red sun to a planet in a yellow solar system, would he be able to leap over tall buildings in a single bound, be impervious to anything, outrace the fastest jet, shrug off a nuclear explosion?—and the last panel has Superman saying, 'You bet!'

"The fourth issue 'Whoops!' is where we use Scabbard, the bad guy from *Thriller*, who is defeated in a way—well, that's never been done before in comics." And though it sounds like *Ambush Bug* will be centering a great deal on comics satire, Giffen flatly contradicted that. "We try to keep the gag foremost. I told Bob from the outset, if the gag isn't funny without the comics reference don't use it. If you can add a comics reference to the gag so that it works on two levels, fine; if you can add a really satiric undertone, so that it works on a multiple level, even better. But none of this straight comics oriented stuff."



Neal Adams

The way I approach working on the Bug is to sit down and block the story out in straight comic book terms—that is, to say Scabbard comes back to life, menaces the city, Ambush Bug nails him, Scabbard loses." Straight terms, ta-bomp, ta-bomp, ta-bomp. Then I say, 'let's stretch this, let's take it to the extreme.' Then I go past that. The average comic book fan, the kind that goes to the comics store whenever they open the door is asking, 'Well, who is he? Where does he come from? What's his origin?' What we want to emphasize is that, with this book, you shouldn't *worry* about stuff like that. Just sit back and enjoy it. Take it at face value!"

Fleming talks a bit more in detail about his dialogue. "I've been trying to keep it about half-and-half between the jokes that all the fans will get, but my wife looks at me real blankly about and the jokes that she can appreciate, but will leave the fans in the dark saying, things like Ronald Reagan *who*? Doesn't he draw *Barren Earth*? I try to keep it fast-paced, too—kind of buckshot humor... kind of like what Robin Williams does on stage—if you tell 60 jokes a page, you're going to get a guaranteed laugh every page.

Talking about how I actually go about writing the dialogue—there's one specific instance in the *DC Presents* #61 that illustrates the method pretty well. I took this page home where the Bug has taken over Superman's body and is sitting there at his desk with all this Superman paraphernalia lying around, a miniature Fortress of Solitude and such, and he's talking to immigration trying to get a green card, which was a great idea, but when I sat down to actually dialogue it, I said, 'This is telling me something different. This is telling me that he's talking to DC and he's picked up all this merchandising and has decided that he wants his cut.'

"It's like a crossword puzzle when I get these pages. I look at the frees and it's all there, and I just have to dig for it."



Two-Gun Kid

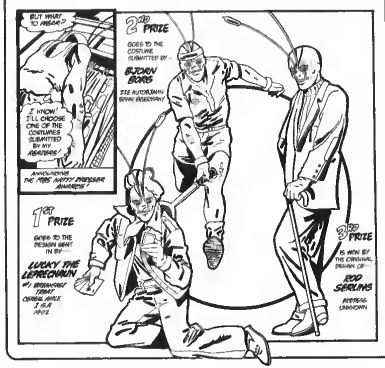
Giffen and Fleming both insist that there's far more to the Bug than first meets the eye. "You caught what he said about his origin in the first *Action* story, right?" asks Giffen. "A man raised by the media, taught to look at life a bit askance. Well, never lose sight of the fact that everything you're getting from the Bug is coming from the Bug himself. That origin was a very standard, kind of Don Quixote origin. The next time he tells his story, you don't know what he'll say. He changes his origin every time he feels like it." He might have been walking down the street when he was teleported to a spaceship where an alien gave him the Ambush Bug costume and now he's a member of the Elite Ambush Bug Corps. Or maybe he was struck by a shellfull of chemicals activated by a bolt of lightning. Hell, who knows?

Says Fleming, "My favorite personal contribution so far is that the Bug was raised by a television set. Keith gave me that first *Action* back-up to dialogue, and in the origin scene said 'Make it kind of Don Quixote-ish.' So he has this guy's face, and, I'm sorry the face says 'brain death.' There were no other words to put to it. It was sort of inevitable. Anyone that has that sort of brain-death face has obviously been watching way too much television.

According to Giffen, the real inspiration for the Ambush Bug comes from several sources, including a 1972 film called *The Ruling Class*, in which Peter O'Toole portrays a member of British royalty who is convinced that he is Jesus Christ, and more definitely "The old Warner Bros. cartoons, with Daffy Duck and Bugs Bunny and characters like that. Particularly the early Bugs—as a matter of fact, I originally wanted his costume to be gray."

But by the time the Bug started appearing in *Action*, Giffen had really gotten the opportunity to crystallize the Bug's direction, where he was headed as a character, which began to diverge from the concept of a certain gray furred carrot eating troublemaker. "The difference in their antics now is that Ambush Bug really thinks he's doing the right thing! He really thought that running around in a horse suit was more dignified than running around in a solid black costume! He really thinks Superman is a good buddy of his! He doesn't understand why people get so mad at him. He doesn't understand why the Teen Titans don't want to appear with him."

"See, the great thing about Ambush Bug," adds Fleming, "is that he makes fun of all this junk culture—but he likes it all! He *really likes it!*"





Why is the panel on the left inside a dotted line? I haven't the foggiest. I just write those captions, y'know. Don't blame me.

Clash of the Titans

"The same creative team keeps following the feature around, which is great, because it gives it a certain consistency. A lot of that is Bob Oksner's inking, because he inks the Bug in a way that makes it look different from anything else around these days. And as far as Julie Schwartz goes, a lot of people talk

about him as one of these guys who is against originality, who's holding the Superman books tightly under his thumb, and that's a total misconception. The man is wide open to new ideas on almost anything. He's been totally supportive. He grouses all the time, puts on that grizzly bear front, but he knows exactly what we're trying to do, and he has supported it from the first.

"Everyone on the book loves it —Bob Oksner, who turned down assignments in order to ink it, John Costanza, the letterer, Tony Tollin, the colorist—we all enjoy the heck out of it." ●

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The Amazing Heroes Hoax Contest

Let me rephrase that—it's all a hoax, but it's for real—that is, it's a genuine contest about fraudulent things—okay, okay, wait...

A staple of the DC Comics of the 1960s was the "hoax story," where characters were constantly running "fake-outs" on one another—Superman on Lois, Batman on Superman, Jimmy Olsen on Batman, and, occasionally, the editor on the reader. You get the idea.

So we're taking this April Fool's Day occasion to look back on some of the more memorable scams pulled during that decade of comics, and—I can't lie about *this*—I had a good time putting this article together. So good a time, as a matter of fact, that I got a little carried away, planted two bogus hoax stories among the tales recounted below, and cajoled Mr. Thompson into making this event into Amazing Heroes' first-ever contest.

So, here now (on the facing column) is Kim Thompson with the prize announcements. —*MARK WAID*

[Thank you, Mr. Waid. Yes indeedy, we have here the makings of a little contest. Here's the scoop: The first five readers to correctly identify the two fraudulent stories will receive up to $15.00 worth of Fantagraphics Merchandise—which they may select from a current catalogue. This includes many many goodies, such as back issues of Amazing Heroes (of course, but also The Comics Journal, Daigoda, The Ditko Collection, Don Rosa's Comics and Stories, Focus on John Byrne, Gil Kane's Savage, Hugo, Journey, Love and Rockets, Mechanics, Neat Stuff, Prince Valiant, The Survivors!, Los Tejanos, The X-Men Companions, and more!

[I know it'll be tough spending just fifteen clams on this great stuff, so for those of you who go over the $15.00 limit, we'll be giving a 30% discount on all further purchases—one time only.

[Who says we aren't all heart? Okay, back to the listings—and sorry they're so scantily illustrated, but it would kinda blow the contest if we used any art from any of the stories. Hokay?] —KIM THOMPSON

"The Girl of Straw"

Supergirl is just exhausted these days—she no longer has the super-endurance she's become used to, and her mighty powers are beginning to fade and fail. Eventually she simply passes out in mid-flight, and is found by cousin Superman, who takes her to his Fortress and thinks "I've been dreading this day—but I knew it had to come! It will be tough for me to tell her the truth", for unknown to her, Kara is not a Krytonian at all, but an android built and programmed by the man she believes to be her biological father, Zor-El, as a super-helper for the Man of Steel—a helper whose power unit has finally begun to burn out. Refusing to accept the truth, Supergirl flies away in a panic, but doesn't get far before, her consciousness and powers fading, she plummets from the sky again, this time towards certain doom...

...as Clark Kent awakens from a fitful slumber. Relieved that it was all a dream, he flies to meet Supergirl for a mission at a prearranged rendezvous point. And what should he find on his way there—but a dead Supergirl android lying, shattered, on the cold, cold ground...

...as Supergirl wakes up with a start from a chilling nightmare in which her cousin dreamt that she was an android!

I still get impressed by this one.

"The Night of March 31st"

Yes, fabled in song and story—it's "The Night of March 31st," a night in which Clark Kent makes some innocuous entry in his diary and goes to bed, only to wake up the next day to witness a Metropolis gone topsy-turvy. Clark encounters a Lori Lemaris with legs, a Bizarro Perry White, a sweet and charming Mr. Mxyzptlk, and a Lana Lang who drives a Good Humor ice-cream wagon chock full o' Green K! Finally Superman is saved from this insanity—by an overwhelmingly polite Luthor, Brainiac, and Bizarro #1, all of whom claim to have known for years that Superman is Clark Kent, having read about it, naturally, in each month's issue of *Superman Comics*. Of course, the Man of Steel doesn't hear this last part—he's just fainted, falling on top of the bottle city of Kandor and crushing it to smithereens.

See, this time the hoax is on the readers. After all, what day does this story take place on, again? March 31st, you say? Wrong, kryptonite-breath—that's the night that Clark goes to bed. Everything else happens the day after, which just happens to be—April Fool's Day.

"Lois Lane's Singing Sweetheart"

Long before the days of Superman vs. Muhammad Ali, back in the '50s and '60s, Superman editor Mort Weisinger loved to use real-life guest-stars in his stories as much as possible, stars such as Orson Welles, Boris Karloff, and Perry Como, just to name a few. In this eight-paper, though, it was thirteen idol Pat Boone who was scheduled to share the stage with Superman for a charity concert—a concert that Superman, in a jealous snit, refused to perform in, once Pat and Lois became an "item" around the city. No one seemed more surprised and hurt than Boone, particularly after his gala key-to-the-city reception in Metropolis, when Superman himself presented him with a special super-hand-crafted guitar made from an ancient musical instrument belonging to a legendary Kryptonian musician. Come the night of the concert, Superman is still adamant in his refusal to appear in the same hall as

the young rock-and-roller—but, through a wild mix-up in assignments, Clark Kent is assigned to cover the event. And, as Pat begins to strum his guitar, we learn the *real* secret behind Superman's action when Clark, hunching down in his seat thinks, "Just as I feared! I found out only after presenting Pat with his guitar that its strings came from the lyre of a Kryptonian sorceror—and his song is turning me into a goat!" Fortunately, just before the transformation is complete, it occurs to Superman that he can reverse the change by whistling certain hypersonic notes to temporarily offset the vibrations from the guitar. Nevertheless, he decides to come clean at the end of the story, swapping out guitars and revealing his hoax to Pat and Lois, who, along with Superman, laugh at the embarrassing mix-up.

"The Man With Superman's Heart"

You wanna talk memorable? Cary Bates scarred me for life when I was seven years old with this two-part tale involving the death of Superman and the subsequent autopsy and operation in which the Man of Steel's heart, hands, lungs, eyes and ears are removed with a kryptonite laser so that they may be transplanted onto the bodies of worthy men and women. Yuck. Naturally, the parts (which were never shown, only masked with a solid black panel stamped "The Comics Code prevents us from displaying Superman's organs" or somesuch) are stolen by Lex Luthor and, with the exception of the heart, which he plans to save for his own old age, are grafted onto and into the bodies of four common thugs, each now possessing one of Superman's powers. Not until the final pages of the second issue do we learn that it has all, indeed, been a trick to entrap Luthor's cronies into committing some major felonies with the body parts of a Superman android (parts, which incidentally, are summarily rejected by their new host bodies, leaving the guy with the eyes blind and the guy with the lungs dead) so that whoever survives can be sent up the river for a long, long time.

"The Secret of Silver Kryptonite"

One morning at the offices of the *Daily Planet*, Jimmy Olsen checks the calendar to find that June 13, 1963 "is almost here," and starts to work gathering silver cups, silver dollars, silver jewelry and more from Superman's friends, taking it all to Professor Potter, who is helping the red-headed reporter concoct something called Silver Kryptonite, "whose effects will go down in history!" When Superman gets wind of this, he grills Jimmy about his actions, but Jim just smiles and keeps mum. For a while, there is much skulking about behind the walls of the laboratory, which are lead-lined in order to discourage a pesky, constantly-spying Man of Steel who's really sweating this one out and who obviously trusts his friends not one *solitary whit*. Finally, June 13 arrives and Superman is invited in and exposed to the dread giant nugget of Silver K—which turns out to be harmless showcase containing miniature silver busts of all Superman's friends, cast to commemorate the 25th anniversary of his arrival in Metropolis. I hope he felt like a heel.

"Dead—'Till Proven Alive"

I guess ol' Mr. Weisinger is rolling over at a pretty good clip by now, so just to be fair, let's shift our sights to one of the great Bat-hoaxes of all time. Penned in 1970, in the wake of all of the "Paul McCartney is dead!" hullabaloo, this story has college frosh Dick Grayson as curious as any of his classmates over the rumor that Saul Cartwright, leader of the Oliver Twists, has been replaced by a lookalike. Cajoling his guardian Bruce into inviting the Fab Foursome over to Wayne Manor during the Gotham City leg of their tour, the Boy Wonder does a little sleuthing to determine if the band leader really *is* dead. As usual, though, it's the Batman who uncovers the truth—that Saul is indeed alive and well—and has coached three lookalikes into taking the place of his partners, who were killed last year in the crash of their private jet!

"The Ransom of Superman"

I've learned a lot of science and physics in my life just from reading comic books, though sometimes I'm left wondering whether or not what I've just been told is really the gospel according to Einstein or whatever. Like, for instance, that old chestnut about how a high voltage of electricity will kill a man—but a very high charge will leave him unharmed. That's the basis for this shoft tale that opens up in a science museum in Metropolis, where Jimmy Olsen is playing "Mr. Wizard" for his fan club, demonstrating this and other oddities of science. They leave just in time to see Superman get captured in a floating force-field by a band of malevolent aliens, who announce a ransom for the Man of Steel of 1000 pounds of Green Kryptonite. After holding a secret conversation in Kryptonese with Superman, Jimmy takes it upon himself to head up the Kryptonite drive. Oddly, though, as the stuff starts really rolling in, Jimmy can't get enough of it, and, like a man possessed, won't stop hoarding the K until he's gathered a veritable mountain of it, easily 100 times what the evil aliens had asked for. Quite pleased, they honor their bargain and let Superman go, all right—dropping him directly on the deadly green hill to his death. But as they land their spaceship and emerge gloating, the Metropolis Marvel abruptly leaps up and collars the whole crew, explaining that, as Jimmy theorized, just at the electricity left Jimmy unharmed, so would such an enormous amount of kryptonite have no effect on his Kryptonian body!

I suppose we should all be grateful that Superman never learned that there's a *difference* between electricity and radiation.

"Lois and Lana Join Forces!"

In this tale of love and war, Lois and Lana, usually rivals for Superman's affection, decide they must ally themselves in order to get rid of Mighty Woman, super-powered visitor from the planet Xaoh who has begun a torrid romance with the Man of Might and seems determined to land him in marriage, thus shutting the two female reporters out for good. The usual Lucy-show type antics ensue for the bulk of the story, with the girls exposing their new rival to everything from Kryptonite to radium to earthly perfume, trying to discover her weakness and drive her away from Earth. Obviously, everyone here is involved in a battle of wits no more challenging than a good game of "pong" until Mighty Woman and Superman, content that they have taught Lois and Lana a well-deserved lesson, take off their masks to reveal themselves as Supergirl and Congo Bill, respectively—the former thoughtfully having lined her disguise with lead "to make certain that the two she-cats wouldn't be able to pierce [her] disguise even with an x-ray machine!" At this point, another Superman comes on the scene—the real one, it turns out, who has been on an important intergalactic mission, but who, having grown increasingly tired of Lois and Lana's fawning and fighting, set up this hoax designed to make the two of them realize how silly their behavior had become over the last few months. Chagrined, the two man-hungry females slink off while Superman, Supergirl, and Bill enjoy a good, hearty laugh. ●



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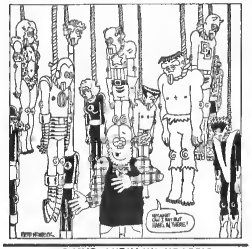
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THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ABLE TO DRAW FUNNY

An Interview with MEGATON MAN's Donald Simpson

Donald Simpson is a lucky fellow. If you don't think so, consider this: The first comic book series he ever started, Megaton Man, was picked up, immediately upon completion, by a major (and highly esteemed) comic book publisher as a regular color comic—who published it virtually unchanged, in a beautifully-produced, deluxe format.

I don't think that statement can be made by any other cartoonist working these days. I mean, you're supposed to work your way up through a couple of collapsing alternative comic book companies, ink or letter a dozen stories for Marvel, and then, maybe, someone will deign to look at your creations. Hell, even Scott McCloud worked in DC's production department for a goodly time before hitting it big with Zot!

So Donald has not, in the words of the worldly wise, paid his dues. The question remains, was Denis Kitchen, his publisher, wrong in pouring all this faith into the work of a 23-year-old (now 24) Detroiter who just one day sat down and started to draw the adventures of the most musclebound (and hare-brained) hero of the decade?

Twould appear not. Response to the series, of which the second issue was just published, has been strong, and Kitchen seems to have copped a new color comic he can confidently stack up next to his reprints of the classic Spirit.

Cil Jordan chatted with Simpson via long-distance phone call on February 14, just days after the release of the second issue of Megaton Man. Cil also transcribed the interview, which was copy-edited for publication by yr. humble servant. —I. Collier



RIGHT: A detail from a flyer Simpson created, using his MEGATON MAN characters.

All artwork on pages 31 through 37 © 1985 Donald Simpson except where noted

AH: *Well, since this is for* **AMAZING HEROES**, *let's do your origin first.*

SIMPSON: I was born here in Livonia, Michigan, in the Detroit area, where I've spent all my life. I was always sketching, but I started reading comics in 1972, at the age of 10. I remember buying every single Marvel comic with the September cover date on it. That was the beginning. I read those pretty intensely for four or five years, until one day I realized that I had them all in plastic bags and was not reading them—buying titles that I'd long since outgrown, or never liked. The greatest thing about that time was that you could still trade and get some of the old stuff from the '60s, so I had Kirby and Steranko, too. I guess my biggest influence was John Romita's *Spider-Man*—and John Buscema and Paul Gulacy.

AH: *That makes you a second-generation Marvel fan.*

SIMPSON: Yeah . . . people like Joe Sinnott. There's a great deal of Artie Simek in my lettering. It was just good industrial strength cartooning.

Then, when I went through high school I was mostly into music and stuff. I still drew things, still had this fantasy that I would someday take over Spider-Man from John Romita. Of course, I've really missed the boat on that by about ten years *[laughs]*, but I still had the idea that I'd go into comics, even though I was taking mostly music and stuff in high school.

Somehow I got ahold of this book called *The Masters of Comic Book Art* by Garriock, and it had Wally Wood, Will Eisner, Crumb, Moscoso . . . and that was a big quantum leap because I started to get undergrounds. I bought *Heavy Metal* and got some Moebius, and a lot of esoteric stuff like that. After seeing what you could do with comic strips, Spiegelman and everything—everything but Marvel Comics—that sort of started a period where I was buying "fine-art" comic strips and stuff.

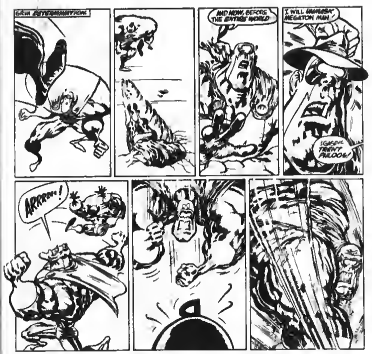
Then I graduated high school and went to France and Switzerland for about 16 days, where I brought back a suitcaseful of albums—among them Bilal and Moebius, a jumbo-sized Moscoso collection, an underground collection—12 or 15 albums. The European material blew my mind; you'd go into a bookstore on some main street in Paris and there'd be leatherbound Shakespeares and Molieres and whatnot and right next to it they'd have this whole wall full of comic book albums. Nothing like in America where you have to trip over black light posters and bubblegum cards to get to the comics, right? It was quite an experience, and I came back to America with this European complex *[laughs]*. I was totally taken over by Moebius for a while and I was trying to get into *Heavy Metal* and stuff.

"I still had this fantasy that I would someday take over Spider-Man from John Romita."

So then in the early '80s I was kicking around between styles and studying a lot—anatomy and pen techniques and brush techniques. Before this I was studying Burne Hogarth's anatomy. Not only that, but I was going to see foreign films and generally being a young man and finding new kinds of creative things that I liked. No matter how hard I tried to go off and be an actor or something else, I'd always come back to all these comic books, all these envelopes that I had sitting around that were full of drawings, saying, "Here's some pretty good stuff, I'll finish some of this stuff off and do some samples and stuff."

AH: *Did you have any contact with cartoonists, especially in the Detroit area?*

SIMPSON: I met Keith Pollard a couple times in high school, and a Detroit cartoonist named James Malone, and Arvell Jones, but aside from that . . . I didn't have too much contact with the New York industry or anything like that. I never assisted anybody or worked my way up through anything. I just sort of one day started this thing.



Megaton Man strikes back: A fight scene from MEGATON MAN #3.

AH: *Did you do much professional work before starting on Megaton Man?*

SIMPSON: No—local ads and stuff. T-shirt designs and whatnot.

AH: *Megaton Man was kicking around awhile before it appeared, right?*

SIMPSON: Not exactly the way you'd think. It wasn't finished until Denis [Kitchen] got it and Denis picked it up ten days after it was completed. So it was partially kicking around for quite a while, but that was because I didn't have any motivation to finish it.

One of my roommates, Mike Kazaleh—he's a Chuck Jones fanatic, had one page published in the last Dope Comix—accused me of not being able to draw funny. Of course, I was drawing Burne Hogarth stuff, real dramatic serious stuff, so I then proceeded to try to draw funny. I was doing these these little funny animals and it really was awful. I went through about one and a half sketchbooks trying to draw funny and then somehow I just drew this humongous, real dumb-looking guy that was sort of funny. And the more anatomically distorted I could made it, using stuff I knew, the funnier it got, so finally I had this character design. I was going to call him Mighty Man or something and then my other roommate, Brian Gabel, took about two seconds and he said "Megaton Man" and we busted up laughing, and I knew that I was going to regret it. So that's how it started.

I knew in a flash all these different ideas about the cold war stuff and the Pentagon and having Megaton Man be this dumb nationalistic patriotic guy that is being used by different factions—which is not really apparent in the first couple of issues, but there are all these things that run under the surface. It all came to me in a flash and I didn't know what to do with it.

That was late '81. I didn't actually start a story 'til January of '83, so I was kicking around that idea for quite a long time. One day I pulled out a sheet of paper and I just sort of started as I went along. I lettered it and drew a picture and that was the "Doctor Software" splash page. I did another few pages and it was coming out pretty funny, so then I stopped and it kicked around for a couple of weeks, and I kept coming back to it on and off and it took about 13 months.

Obviously, I was sort of competing with Superduperman, and I think it owes stuff to Wonder Wart-Hog and even as far back as [the *Mad* story] "Casey at the Bat" which probably doesn't come to mind to a lot of comic book people, but goes back to the old concept of the big stupid hero. I was also teaching myself about cartooning as I went along. My lettering was improving and I was learning how to ink and pencil. I didn't know how tight to pencil it and how much to leave to the inking and different things. I was teaching myself the Donald Simpson school of cartooning. Every little page was an experiment, so it's really wildly inconsistent, especially the first issue, but that's because I didn't want to be consistent. If I could somehow draw something better the next page or the next panel I was gonna do it. I wasn't gonna hold back, so I did everything, and it was sort of a way of getting all the Marvel stuff out of my system, and have fun with it. I could also appropriate people's styles. If I were doing it seriously, it would probably be a little more illegitimate, but doing it as a parody I could get away with it—at least to my own mind. So that's basically how the first issue started out. I must have junked like five or six pages *[laughs]* and every couple of months when I'd come back to it I'd change panels around and redraw stuff and pad stuff. It took a long time and I did a lot of contemplating and fooling around with it.

I'd sent a couple page story that I did immediately prior to the first issue to *RAW* magazine thinking somehow that they might appreciate that I was making fun of superheroes. Of course they didn't, not surprisingly in retrospect. I had aspirations to modern art, but I had all this Marvel gunk between my ears.

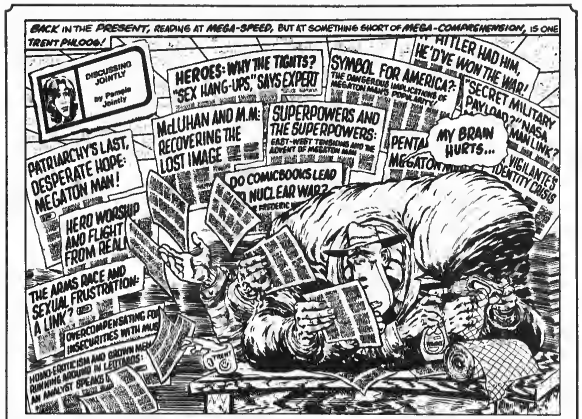
When I had about 10 or 12 pages done I sent it to Fantagraphics and Eclipse and Aardvark-Vanaheim and they all turned me down. As I kept sending it to different people I found that people that took superheroes seriously didn't really appreciate it—they thought it was cute but they'd rather see serious super-heroes—and people that hated super-heroes entirely they might have agreed with my attitude toward super-heroes but they still didn't want to touch it all.

So finally I finish it all up, 13 months after I started *[laughs]*, and I Xerox it off and I do a nice little presentation package and color the cover and put acetate covers on it and staple it and I send it to 15 publishers blind—*Mad* magazine, *Heavy Metal*, Last Gasp, anybody. Half the people folded before it even got to them. I got letters from Capital and they said they'd love to publish it. [Capital's editor Richard] Bruning really liked it. "But unfortunately we're dead" *[laughs]* I was expecting a lot of nice stationery back from people, with mostly offers like "Well, this is pretty good, it needs a lot of work, but why don't you come out and letter for us" or something like that so I could begin to participate as a professional somewhere.

Pacific turned it down, and the very next letter I got was one of those blue envelopes from Kitchen Sink and Denis [Kitchen] was just ecstatic over it. The funny thing is, I almost didn't send it to them because you wouldn't suspect at all that they would suddenly want to publish anything with a costume. And it's sort of ironic because immediately after I finished the first issue and sent it off, I figured, well, I might do another one of these next year, and looking at my drawing and my inking, I figured I needed a lot more studying, a lot more work, so I pulled out the Steve Canyons and I was going at it, trying to do Milt Caniff brush work, and practically as I was doing that the letter came. It was really really weird, a sword-out-of-the-stone kind of thing, where I finally had made it. Denis didn't want any changes in the story. We did a cou-

Donald Simpson renders the whole Kitchen Sink family. You recognize 'em all, don't you?





Other heroes get slogans like "Up, up, and away" or "It's clobberin' time"...

ple more cover designs to get it right, which I agreed with, because I had different ones that weren't really immediate and clear so we went through a couple.

It took about eight months to get it published [laughs], with the contract and everything. We found out that there was a fanzine called *Megaton* out of Illinois that had amateur strips in it (here I am, I've got two comic books published and I'm calling other people amateurs, right?) so we got in touch with them and Denis sent them a copy and the publisher, Gary Carlson, was real cooperative. It turned out he'd gone to Denis about a year before that—Denis had no recollection of it, but he had asked Denis about printing and prices and stuff and apparently Denis had given him good advice so he was more than happy to let us use the word "Megaton Man" and promise no legal problem or anything.

AH: *Those can be a hassle.*

SIMPSON: Yeah, because if the name went, the whole idea to me would be worthless. We couldn't think of anything close to Megaton Man.

We went through a couple more cover designs and then we had to get the thing colored and finally we put it on the printing schedule.

The thing was the publicity. We wanted the publicity to come out and had planned a poster and Don Thompson [of the *Comics Buyer's Guide*] had promised us a review. It was late September and we still hadn't seen anything to come out, so I said, "Well, put it back a month," so it was going to come out in November. Two days after I said that we got a great review in the *Buyer's Guide* and the poster was out and stuff so people were waiting for it for two months and finally it came out around Christmas. That's about as far as it goes, the story of the first issue.

AH: *I was impressed with the production values. Are you happy with the way the book looks?*

SIMPSON: The second issue I think is brilliant—the coloring. And Pete [Poplaski] does fantastic covers. They do really great work, these guys—I don't really work with them. I just send it to them and I'm sort of stuck with whatever they do, but they're the best, what can I say?

AH: *Does Denis have any input in how the stories are going? There seems to be quite a bit of difference between the first story and the next two.*

SIMPSON: No, as a matter of fact, Denis is reluctant to tamper with my head at all. I literally begged him to tell me what to do next because I had no idea what to do after that first issue. Actually, in that eight months between I'd started a story for the second issue that was entirely incoherent, so that we dumped and the second issue I did in about six weeks from scratch, which was something completely different from 13 months.

The only comments that he's made is that he's terrified that I might start going over people's heads. But I'm really not worried about getting that good. That's about the only input he's had.

He only found one thing objectionable in the third issue, and it was easy enough to change. Pamela and Stella go to the University of Michigan, and I was going to call it the University of Megaton, but Denis for some reason found that a real insult to his intelligence, so I said, "Sure. I've probably done more stupid jokes than that, but if you really find it objectionable we'll change it." So I think I'm going to have a plot where the University of Michigan changes their name to Megaton and have all these reasons why they do it—because they're seeking defense contracts, and stuff—so I'll fix him! [laughs] He's not going to say a damn thing from now on! No, but it's been real good. You've got a

guy who's probably published the best people in the business—he looks at Will Eisner and Milt Caniff art every day—and he doesn't take on that many new projects and in fact he's probably risking his reputation being perceived as going super-hero or something. I have no complaints at all. From everybody I've talked to they tell me he's the absolute best publisher I could find and I'm pretty convinced of that.

AH: *Megaton Man is in odd book in that it seems to careen back and forth among satire, parody, and pastiche.*

SIMPSON: That's probably something I'm guilty of. You might look at it that I'm sort of tearing apart these symbols and putting them together again so that I can work with them. If you look at Alan Moore—I don't know how to compare us, we're not doing anything alike, but everything he touches he sort of tears apart and puts it back together so he can work with it. I'm not hellbent on doing superheroes, but I'm playing with that concept, because I think that with all these basically naked people running around on the skylines, there's some sort of psychological or societal underpinning to it. Not that I'm real cerebral or anything, but I think there's got to be something to all this stuff.

AH: *You seem to have it in for Doonesbury.*

SIMPSON: "Have it in"? [*Laughs*] I hope not too much in. Again, it's just sort of poking fun at that. In fact I saw some really good Trudeaus really. No, I'm just being a smartaleck as far as that goes. To me it gave the first issue another stylistic dimension to have a super-hero battle be a media event to the point where the timely comic strips revolve around it, and it was sort of an experiment. Also, part of me is aspiring to Burne Hogarth, illustrational type stuff, and the other part of me writes these gags. It's a form that everybody's exposed to, so to me the three and four panel strips come pretty naturally. Not that I sit down like Eisenstein and think, "What forms am I going to use?" but it works out that way [*laughs*].

AH: *Improv comics.*

SIMPSON: Yeah. By the seat of your pants.

AH: *You also seem to be taking on* Love and Rockets.

SIMPSON: In the third issue there's going to be a bit of parody, a brief mention of Love and Rockets. *It's not very good [laughs]* because that was the part I had to do really quickly to finish it up. There's one panel that looks like

"Love And Rockets #2 really blew my mind. There were three months where I couldn't think of anything else."



Simpson parodies the LOVE AND ROCKETS crew in MEGATON MAN #3.

possibly Jaime drew it, but it's pretty bad all in all. People have looked at it and can tell it's *Love and Rockets*. Hopefully your sales will skyrocket.

AH: *If we do half as well as Megaton Man we'll be happy. I understand even Denis was surprised by the response to Megaton Man.*

SIMPSON: Yeah. Of course he had a real pessimistic attitude, so I don't know. Not that he's generally a pessimistic guy, but he didn't get his hopes up.

AH: *Well, if you'd been an underground publisher through the late '70s and early '80s, you'd be a pessimist too. Which brings up the point. Do you think it'll cause problems for the book, with Denis being identified as an "underground publisher"?*

SIMPSON: I don't know. I've wondered about it, but Kitchen Sink's is an amazingly diverse line of books. I think he must have liberal readers and really reactionary readers—especially Steve Canyon. Somehow amidst all of this is Denis Kitchen the enigmatic figure. The teflon publisher.

Maybe we should talk a little about the couple of pages I inked in *Journey*.

AH: *I was going to bring that up. How did it come about, and how did you enjoy collaborating with another artist?*

SIMPSON: Well, I'll tell you. Of course, Bill had been in some Michigan titles like *Power Comics* and *A+ Plus*. I knew who he was but actually I didn't meet him until the Chicago convention last year. (I had to go to Chicago to meet Bill Loebs, which seems like an extraordinary thing to do for two Detroiters.) We met there and I gave him a call when I got back. He'd seen my ads for *Megaton Man*—that was all that was out at that point—and he was happy to meet me. He came over, I handed him a copy of the first issue, left the room to get us some drinks, and I heard this explosive laughter from the living room. It sounded like maybe he was dying or gagging or something.

AH: *Bill's a good laugher.*

SIMPSON: Yeah. I told Denis Kitchen that Bill had nearly gagged laughing so I used that as a direct quote in the ads. But anyway, that's how we got together. I started reading all the *Journeys* and he was reading all of my work and he was going through all this stuff with Aardvark which I was hearing because Nadine [Loebs] was talking my ear off a couple of times so I'd hear all this gossip. It was really interesting because I never hear gossip.

It's neat knowing Bill because he's a writer-artist-creator, and living right here, so he's got deadline problems and stuff that he's encountered and I'm encountering and I have no way to know what to do with stuff so I'm asking him all these questions, it's really good to have somebody that has a little experience that you can ask questions to. That's how we got to know each other.

He was facing this deadline problem with you guys, so he called up and asked if I would ink a few pages outright, cold, styles not meshing or anything, and just to get the thing done, and we did it,



Avare self-portrait by Donald Simpson, surrounded by his creations, from a promotional flyer done for a local comics shop.

and I think it looked really good. I was really surprised that still could come over and let someone ink his stuff without a sedative [laughs] because it's not something I could do. It was a lot of fun. It was sort of like Iger-Eisner West.

AH: *How was it working on Bill's pencils? They aren't real tight, at least the ones I've seen.*

SIMPSON: He's gotten to the point where he can pencil just as much as he needs for his inking. Some of it I wouldn't touch because it wasn't clear enough and I didn't want to wreck it, and other stuff he pencilled a little more. There was plenty of references of Wolverine and B.K. and stuff like that.

I'd inked a panel in an earlier issue, and he inked a couple of panels in *Megaton Man* #2. I wonder if you can spot them. He was going to run a contest in the letters page if you could tell which panel I had inked in a previous issue. But it was really neat because I'd never inked somebody else's stuff seen what somebody else does to your pencils or anything like that. I really wouldn't want to do that for a living or do it forever, but it's sort of neat to say you've done it and know what it's like.

AH: *Did you find it instructive working with Bill?*

SIMPSON: Yeah. He's a wealth of knowledge and techniques. We've yet to go out to an art supplies store but we're going to do that. We have these shop talks. That's something that I miss being here in Detroit: there's nobody really you can talk to, trade secrets with, trade ideas about how to work. You can read *The Comics Journal* and get theory, or get ideas as to what something should be in the overall, but as far as the actual practical aspects of it, you don't have people you can talk to, you can gain experience from—especially people who are more experienced than you. Because I basically taught myself all this stuff. And imitated out of magazines and the printed page.

AH: *Ever have any formal art training?*

SIMPSON: Yeah, I had a really good art course in high school. We had a half-dry career center which had different career oriented things like drafting, and stuff. Mine was commercial art and we had just a tremendous amount of supplies and stuff to do stuff with. I walked out of there with a tremendous portfolio. That's back when Carter was in office and we had funding for these things, I don't know how it is now. That was probably my most beneficial formal education. It wasn't so much esthetics or style, it was handling stuff, learning airbrushing and rapidographs and rubber cementing and dry-mounting and mounting and everything. Practical stuff. Mechanical stuff. Key lighting. Stat cameras and everything. Templates. Useful things, templates.

AH: *Yeah. They help a lot, unless you have a really steady hand. What comics do you enjoy reading?*

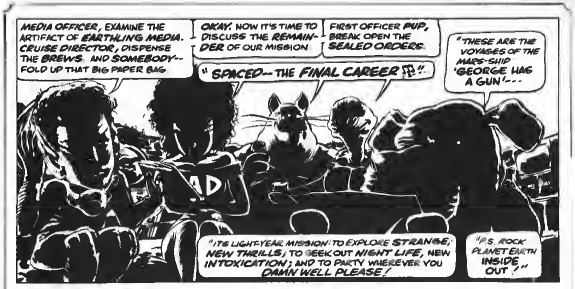
SIMPSON: Well, like I said, from '81 to now basically I haven't been reading mainstream comics. Mostly I've been reading Henry Miller and seeing Fellini and Eisenstein and Orson Welles movies and stuff like that. Actually, there was a point where I was only reading *The Comics Journal*, which is probably something you've heard before: people that don't read comics, only read the *Journal*, because there's nothing—I'd pick up a John Byrne title at the local book store and I couldn't imagine that I'd ever read the *Fantastic Four* judging from that. Not to put down somebody I've never met; it's just that I totally lost interest in what has come to be Marvel.

That sort of changed when I got *Love and Rockets* #2 which really blew my mind. There were three months where I couldn't think of anything else. I've started reading that and *Journey* and *Cerebus* and what else? What shows promise here? I find that I'll buy stuff just to keep up on certain things now. Of course, I'm getting *Steve Canyon* and *The Spirit* and

JOURNEY's Wolverine MacAlistaire, as pencilled by Bill Loebs and inked by Donald Simpson. (From JOURNEY #17.)



© 1985 William Messner-Loebs



Trek or treat?

stuff. *Omaha* is really good, by Reed Weller. I was sort of interested in *Mars* for a while until they cancelled it.

I really liked *Whisper* from Capital. In fact I went so far as to call up Richard Larson and volunteered to ink for him. The only thing holding it back was the lettering and inking. He said, "Well, fine, but there's no plans to do anything." He'd already gone back to commercial art. But I really liked that strip and it was sort of funny how Whisper looked like Spider-Man and then shortly after that Spider-Man looked like Whisper, because she had a black costume with Spider-Man eyes and she moved and posed like Spider-Man and suddenly those shakers and movers [chuckles] in New York City found out the same thing or something. But that's about it. At this point I could really digress into a Gary Groth editorial, like: What I Think Of The World. Oh, Dadgoda looks pretty good, although I have to say I'm more interested in Kevin Nowlan's stuff than the other guy. And I subscribe to the *Journal*, and that's about all that I read. I find I don't even have time to read what I get ahold of.

AH: *Anything else you want to say? You're reaching 10,000 people, what do you want to tell them?*

SIMPSON: Well, I tell ya, as far as telling people what I'm going to be doing to me that's really ludicrous. Who wants to know what's going to happen before they read it? In 1973, when I was 12 years old I bought the Steranko *History of Comics* through the mail, and they sent me a sample *Comixene*, the first fan publication I'd ever read that had previews. I was really shocked because in it they said that they were planning on killing off



MEGATON MAN's media connection. All this and Trudeau too.

Gwen Stacy in *Spider-Man*. I don't know if they mentioned her specifically, but they told people that they were going to kill off somebody. I didn't even read the book and I just couldn't believe that Marvel would have that little consideration for that mystical bond between the reader and the cartoonist. You don't let on what you're going to do before you do it because there's this respect for each other. I could never understand it, and that's all that I see in the fan press except for the *Journal*. To me that's really stupid. Why would you want to know what happens in *Citizen Kane*? Why would you want to know who Rosebud is? It's stupid. And people keep bagging this shit and taping it and filing it. I can't understand this mentality. [Sic, he]

AH: *That's still very well, Donald, but what's coming up in Megaton Man #5? Come on, now.*

SIMPSON: [Laughs] Well, we're going to give him a new costume—

AH: *All black.*

SIMPSON: Kill off five of his girlfriends—what'd you say?

AH: *All black.*

SIMPSON: All black?

AH: *Yeah—the costume, not the girlfriends.*

SIMPSON: Oh yeah, it's got a life of its own. No, I'm just kidding. There won't be any X-Men parodies because I never read the X-Men, that's all I can say. There may be a Henry Miller parody, but that would make it a mature title. And you know how poorly those things sell.

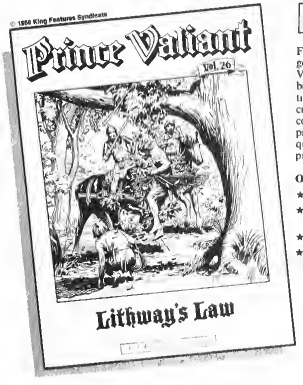
GIL JORDAN last interviewed Neal and Kristine Adams of Continuity for AH. *And Rosebud was Kane's sled. nyah hah hah hah haaah (Gotcha!)*





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SPLASH!

A Hero History of the Underwater Heroine

by JOHN BRENT

The Dolphin, created in 1968 by DC romance-writer/artist J. Scott Pike, first saw print in the December 1968 issue of Showcase (#79). Discovered by U.S. Navy frogmen, C.P.O. Chris Landau and Seaman 1st Class Ben Harkey, she is living underwater in the wreck of a World War II vessel, the U.S.S. *Arabesque*. After a second encounter she is taken aboard their ship and named, by Chris, "Dolphin." A doctor's examination reveals she is part fish, with gill-like slits and slight webbing between her fingers and toes. Subsequently, it is discovered that prolonged absence from water is fatal to her and she returns to the sea.

An impending typhoon imperils the Naval mission to recover vital documents from the sunken vessel. Dolphin encounters Chris again when it is discovered that an explosive charge will detonate if a scuba diver goes near the safe. The buckling of the vault's outer chamber, due to torpedo damage, has created a space too small for a diver. Dolphin is enlisted to retrieve the documents, and does so despite unexpected peril when the precariously positioned ship slides into a deep chasm. There Chris, who has fallen in love with Dolphin, is saddened when she returns to the sea once more.

She is not seen again for almost ten years, when she made a three-panel appearance in *Showcase* #100 (May 1978) rescuing Sugar and Spike from a car trapped underwater. It is intimated in this story that Aquaman knows Dolphin's origins. Five years later Dolphin, along with other heroes, is expected by a prematurely-aged Rip Hunter and crew, plus Dane Dorrance, Rick Flagg, and Cave Carson in *Action* #545. But she doesn't arrive until *Action* #552 (Feb. 1984), along with Animal Man and Congo Bill.

Her involvement in plotlines stretching back to *Action* #536 began when she awoke one day before a golden undersea temple, one of five scattered throughout



From ACTION #552: A long-awaited revival.

From SHOWCASE #100: The Dolphin rescues Sugar and Spike and Aquaman hints at her origin.



Art on pages 39-40 © 1978, 1979 DC Comics, Inc.



The Dolphin credo.

the globe was spotted by Dane Dorrance and the other Sea Devils, and she fled only to be captured by the U.S. Navy. She managed to escape and return to the sea.

After she recounts her tale to the assembled heroes, Rip Hunter explains how a time trip to the sixth pyramid at the beginning of time prematurely aged him and his crew. They all met Immortal Man, who has gathered them together. Their combined minds telepathically alert Superman to the true cause of a prehistoric nightmare menacing Metropolis. Afterwards Dolphin teams up with Dane Dorrance as part of a plan to tap computers located in the five pyramids. They run afoul of government agents in the Bahamas. Using this information, Superman and Rip Hunter destroy the sixth pyramid, stop Vandal Savage's prehistoric plague and restore Rip and his crew to their true ages.

Dolphin, in her first four appearances, wore a light-blue sleeveless shirt and cut-off jeans. This would change in her next appearance ten months later in DC *Comics Presents* #78. Dolphin's attire currently consists in part of a purplish blouse with an oriental collar and yellow design of unusual pattern on its front. Her command of the English language has improved, but still betrays her unknown origins.

Rip's crew and Dane Dorrance are absent when Dolphin and the others are introduced to the media by Rip Hunter at a press conference as the "Forgotten Heroes." Following an encounter with Ultivac and Mr. Poseidon that disrupts the press conference, Dolphin and the others team up with Superman, who has trailed Atom-Master, a newly recruited member of an evil conspiracy which includes the Enchantress and Rip's old nemesis, Kraklow, and go on a time trip to Kraklow's 18th century castle. After Superman has been transformed into a dragon by Kraklow's magic, he is overcome by Animal Man, Animal Man and Dolphin, as part of a two-pronged attack, invade Kraklow's castle using a nearby river which serves as the castle's water supply. Rick Flagg manages to destroy the statue that transformed Superman. But Kraklow sends the eight heroes to the far future where they encounter the Faceless Creature from Saturn.

During this encounter, Immortal Man loses one of his endless lives to save Dolphin from a falling boulder. Then on the water world of Qania, in pursuit of the third member of the mystical Triad, Dolphin fails to uncover any connection to her own past. But the stranded travelers do meet the Space Cabby. After the Triad strands them on a second world, they are rescued by Chris KL-99 and his partners, Halk and Jerro, aboard their ship, *The Pioneer*. On the living planet, Yggardis, they discover that the planet itself is the third member of the sorcerous Triad. After escaping from the planet, Chris uses *The Pioneer*'s laser to disrupt the Triad's mystical link. After a quick trip to the 16th century to check out the vanished Kraklow's castle and to retrieve Rip Hunter's time sphere and Cave's Mighty Mole, Superman and the Forgotten Heroes return to their own time.

Dolphin will be featured in an upcoming issue of *Who's Who*. ●

From DC COMICS PRESENTS #77: The search for Dolphin's origins.



DOLPHIN CHECKLIST

SHOWCASE

#79, Dec. 1968
"The Fantasy at 14 Fathoms"
(18 pages)
J. Scott Pike/Pike
Cover: J. Scott Pike

#100, May 1978
"There Shall Come a Gathering"
(34 pages)
Paul Kupperberg & Paul Levitz/Joe Staton
Cover: Joe Staton & Dick Giordano

ACTION

#552, Feb. 1984
"Another time! Another Death!"
(23 pages)
Marv Wolfman/Gil Kane
Cover: Gil Kane

#553, Mar. 1964
"The World at Time's End"
(23 pages)
Marv Wolfman/Gil Kane
Cover: Gil Kane

DC COMICS PRESENTS

#77, Jan. 1985
"Triad of Terror"
(23 pages)
Wolfman/Curt Swan/Dave Hunt
Cover: Eduardo Barreto

WHO'S WHO

[Issue not yet out]
(1 page)
Cover: George Perez



No. 1 was a smash hit! No. 2 is even Better!



THE TRUE, REAL, FIRST SUPER-HERO

by Walter Irwin

It is one of the cruelest ironies of comics lore that the origin of one of the greatest—perhaps the greatest—superheroes is shrouded in deep mystery. Now, thanks to the combined efforts of dozens of comics professionals and enthusiastic fans, the truth has been discovered. We are proud to present for the first time

The Secret Origin of Pureheart the Powerful!

Our story begins in the year 1933. Two shy, introspective boys from Cleveland, Ohio, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, prompted by the fantastic science fiction and heroic crimefighter pulps they both loved, decided to create a new hero.

"We made him everything we weren't," revealed Shuster recently. "A small town WASP, intelligent, not handsome, but cute, popular in school, having dozens of friends. Most importantly, however, he was just a nice, average guy. We thought of the old adage 'strong in spirit and pure of heart'."

"So it was natural that we'd call him Pureheart," said Siegel. "But we thought something was missing. . . . We thought, Who'd want to read about somebody who was really nothing more than America's typical teenager?' So we decided to go whole hog."

Archie Pureheart, as Siegel and Shuster had previously named their character, became instead Pureheart the Powerful. Shuster designed the red-checked hair, the bulging muscles, and a simple but vibrant costume. (He was also responsible for the lissome figures of supporting characters Betty and Veronica, modeling them after two local billboard girls.) Siegel's sister suggested the crowning touch—a 'valentine' heart chest emblem. Siegel's scripts were equally enthusiastic, pitting Pureheart against the forces of evil, poverty, and war. Like the boys themselves, Archie Pureheart displayed a developing social conscience.

> *"We made him everything we weren't. . . a small town WASP, intelligent, not handsome, but cute, popular in school, having dozens of friends."*

As comic books had not yet been created, the boys developed their ideas into a continuity comic strip.

Siegel and Shuster found it difficult to get newspaper syndicate editors interested in their idea. A typical response went, "We are in the market only for strips likely to have the most extraordinary appeal, and we don't feel Pureheart the Powerful fits into that category."

Finally, the legendary Captain Joseph M. Patterson of the New York Daily News-Chicago Times-Herald Syndicate gave the boys a piece of advice which would, in only two short years, change the course of history and create a new form of art—the comic book.

Let Siegel recall it for us:

"'Boys,' said the Captain in his avuncular way, 'Forget this teen stuff. We've got a war with the Huns coming up, and readers want older people for their heroes. Pureheart is a super character, but give me a super man.'"

The advice of the most powerful figure in newspaper publishing was not to be taken lightly so Siegel and Shuster rushed back to Cleveland where they destroyed every existing scrap of Pureheart material—strips, scripts, notes, sketches—everything. They then sat down and created, in about 20 minutes, the less powerful, and considerably less interesting, Superman.

The boys rushed their new creation back to Patterson. He rejected it out of hand. Dejected, they sold the material to Harry Donenfeld, who published it as one of the first "comic books" with moderate success.

Shortly thereafter, Fawcett Publications editor Bill L.C. Parker sent young artist C.C. Beck to talk with Siegel and Shuster. Fawcett was planning a new character, similar to Superman, but wanted to avoid duplication as much as possible. Could Siegel and Shuster suggest any changes?

"They were helpful as could be," remembers C.C. Beck. "We'd all read *Gladiator* and the pulps and stuff, so the powers weren't any problem. We ran into trouble when we revealed that our character then called Captain Thunder was to come from another planet. Jerry suggested we not do it too much like Superman, then told us about this 'Pureheart' character, and both of them gave us permission to use a magical change of identity for Captain Thunder. Once back to our own offices, Bill and I brainstormed it into the whole thing of Ultimate Good versus Ultimate Evil, the Seven Deadly Sins, all that. We never dreamed National would sue us, and we know that Joe and Jerry were as surprised as we were."

Siegel and Shuster went on to chronicle the adventures of Superman and other National (DC) characters, forgetting all about Pureheart—except for one notable and important moment. In 1940, artistic team Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, seeking new characters to sell to the burgeoning Timely Comics house, petitioned the more established Siegel and Shuster for any unused ideas they had floating around. The two outlined the details of Pureheart again still wanting to see him in print one way or another.

"We didn't even care that it wouldn't be us doing the work," said Shuster. "After all, we were making a good living doing Superman and didn't have time to fool with much of anything else. But Pureheart was our baby, the start of it all, and we wanted him to make it too."

Simon and Kirby, however, were not your average creative team. Both were skilled artists and writers, both were endlessly creative, and both liked to eat as well as possible. They mulled over Siegel and Shuster's concepts, then decided to merge the best of each. They envisioned Pureheart as the alter ego of the Archie character, a manifestation of the power of his "pure heart." Kirby's original sketches for the character, only two of which still exist, display the artist at the peak of his early style: Pureheart's torso bursts with muscles, his jaw is like granite, and his fists are three sizes larger than normal. a rough pencil sketch of Simon's vision of "Archie's gang" also still exists. Notations (in Simon's own hand) identify the characters as Hamburger, Sweetbets, Rattie, Vavoomronica, Principal Weddahbee, and Big Moishe.

> *". . . Betty became Superteen, Jughead became Captain Hero, and Reggie could call on the power of his 'evil heart' and become Pureheart's nemesis, Evilheart."*

Timely's publisher Martin Goodman wasn't that impressed with the result. He thought the "spirit" part of the character was more important than the "heart" part, and instructed Simon and Kirby to play it up. Working furiously, they spent the better part of half an hour transforming the simple beauty of a character with a "pure heart" into the overblown theatrics of a hero who "embodied the entire spirit of America." Pureheart was again abandoned in favor of a gaudier costume and flashier origin. Simon and Kirby sold Captain America to Timely, and Pureheart was again forgotten.

Having achieved a bare modicum of success with Captain America, Simon and Kirby were quick to call fould when MLJ Comics rushed out a red-white-and-blue-garbed character called "The Shield." Threats of lawsuits flew back and forth until, finally, an amicable settlement was reached. Part of it was an agreement by MLJ to buy several character proposals from Simon and Kirby. Among these was Pureheart the Powerful.

MLJ chief John Goldwater, sick to death of superheroes, initially pushed aside the concept. "But for some reason," he admitted recently, "I kept thinking about it. Somewhere, underneath all of that Kirby and Simon bombast, was something good and pure, something as naive and simplistic as Superman and Captain Marvel. But I'd be gosh-darned if I was going to publish another superhero. I hated 'em, even those that made money."

With sudden inspiration, Goldwater found a way to have his cake and eat it too. "I just gave the character to Bob Montana, told him to throw out all the superhero stuff, and call the kid Archie Hardy."

Montana did as he was told (wisely changing the last name to the more alliterative and less actionable "Andrews"), and a star was born. Archie and his friends became so successful that all plans to introduce the superheroic element were scrapped. Archie vindicated Goldwater's gut feeling by not only outlasting the MLJ superheroes but by eventually having the entire line named after him.

By the time the '50s rolled around, the origins of the character had been successfully obscured. Almost all of the Simon and Kirby artwork, etc. had been destroyed, and any reference to the existence of Pureheart the Powerful was vehemently denied. In time, Pureheart's very existence was forgotten by everyone. When a short, abortive attempt was made by Archie Comics to revive superheroes in 1959, no one even thought to suggest Pureheart as a candidate. It was as though he had never existed.

In the early 1960s organized comics fandom came into being. Like other collectors, comic fans were interested in more than the books themselves. They wanted to know all they could about the writers, artists, publishers, circumstances of publishing, origins of characters, and so forth. A surprisingly large amount of this material was amassed in a relatively short time, and published in so-called "fanzines." As these students of comics history began to compare notes, an unusual conviction began to grow in the minds of many. They suspected the existence of a single, unifying inspiration for all major comics characters—the powers, costume, and secret identity of Superman, the magic transformations of Captain Marvel, the spiritual resonances of Captain America. However hard they searched, no one was ever able to identify this one, unique character.

When Stan Lee and Steve Ditko created the character of Spider-Man in 1963, many elements of the strip—a teenage hero, an almost "magical" origin, an emphasis on teen activities, friends and family life, a grumpy, bombastic authority figure, etc.—caused small bells to ring in the heads of many knowledgeable fans. They could learn little about the character's origins, however, beyond the fact that Stan Lee admitted the inspiration had come from some half-remembered talks he'd had with Jack Kirby years before.

It wasn't until 1964 that a breakthrough was made. Artists Jim Steranko and Neal Adams were just beginning to come into their own about this time and, as hot properties, were courted by both Marvel and DC. Adams, always the iconoclast, had other plans. During a short stint at Archie Comics a few years previously, Adams had discovered a few existing Simon and Kirby sketches of Pureheart. Now, in concert with Steranko, he went to Goldwater with a proposal: Pureheart the Powerful. Goldwater was already planning to publish campy revivals of MLJ Golden Age heroes in his Mighty Comics line; why not go all the way? Pureheart, however, would be—must be—done completely straight.

The capper," laughed Adams merrily, "was Jim's threat to reveal how Pureheart was replaced by everybody, including Goldwater, back in the Golden Age in his forthcoming 'History of the Comics'. That made Goldwater fold up, and we got what we wanted. What's ironic is that Jim's plans called for the revelation to be made in the *final* volume of his series, not the first! Goldwater would still have his secret today if he'd held out."

Adams and Steranko spent several months revamping Pureheart. Noting the success of Marvel with myriad, interconnecting superheroes, they decided to grant powers to other members of Archie's gang. Betty became Superteen, Jughead became Captain Hero, and Reggie could call on the power of his "evil heart" and become Pureheart's nemesis, Evilheart. A full orchestra of villains and situations was created as well.

Around this time, Siegel, who was writing for Mighty Comics, found out about the project and informed Adams and Steranko of Pureheart's true origins. Although much of it was outdated, a quick call to Shuster gave Adams enough information to recreate Pureheart's uniform exactly as Siegel and Shuster had envisioned it over 50 years before.

The last laugh, however, was Goldwater's. When Adams and Steranko brought their finished work to him, they discovered that their contract contained a hidden clause which stated that although Archie Comics agreed to accept and use Adams and Steranko's concepts, any changes deemed "compatible to existing standards" could be made. Before gleefully having them evicted from the premises, Goldwater told them that Pureheart and his friends would indeed be done . . . in traditional Archie style.

> *"Of all the superheroes or action characters ever created, it can be said that Pureheart is one of us."*

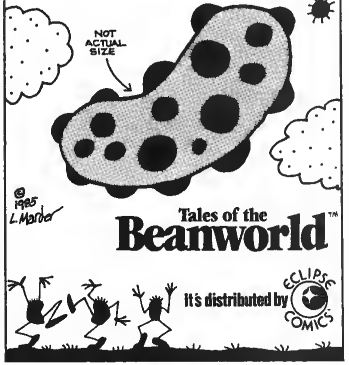
Thus the saga of Pureheart the Powerful came to an end. Although the characters enjoyed a brief spurt of success, mainly with younger readers, the disdain in which they were obviously held by their creators put off many older readers. But fans could somehow sense the innate wonder, power, originality, and sheer greatness of the character obscured though it might be by cartoonish art and campy, silly storylines. The dream could not overpower the stark reality, however, and in a few short years, Pureheart was gone. His legacy remains, for he was truly the first and foremost superhero, the father of all to follow.

Although it is unlikely that Pureheart the Powerful will ever be revived in a form which will do justice to his origins and potential, we may still hope. For hope is what Pureheart was all about: hope and the identification which every reader immediately felt with the character. Each of us feels that he or she is "pure of heart" and that we would be able to call upon that inner purity to battle evil if need be. Pureheart the Powerful is a direct representation of that very personal conviction. Of all the superheroes or action characters ever created, it can truly be said that Pureheart the Powerful *is* one of us. ●

WATER IRWIN last wrote about Star Trek *in* **AH** *#67*

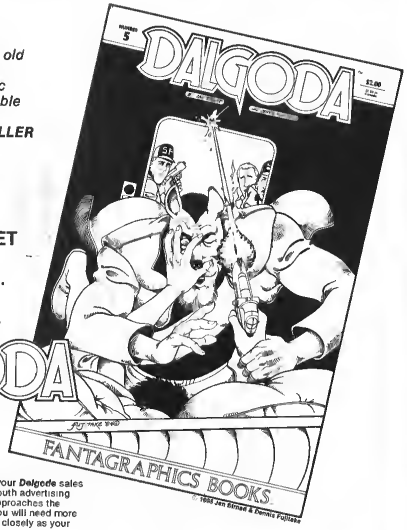
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IN DALGODA #5: A TRAITOR UNMASKED! A PLANET ON THE BRINK OF DISASTER! AND... THE DECISION!



Retailers: Don t overlook the fact that your **Dalgoda** sales are increasing! As the good word-of-mouth advertising increases interest and the magazine approaches the climax of its first extended storyline, you will need more copies to keep up with demand. Watch closely as your **Dalgoda** sales grow and grow!

***Dalgoda* #5** features "Dalgoda Come Home, Part One," as Dalgoda struggles to stay alive long enough to return to his home planet, by **Jan Strnad, Dennis Fujiteke**, and **Kenneth Smith**. And "Grimwood's Daughter" continues as Tirol and the other elves face the attack of the Dragon Riders, by **Strnad, Kevin Nowlen**, and **Smith**.

GRIMWOOD'S DAUGHTER



Coming in March from
FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

by WILL JACOBS and GERARD JONES

THE COMIC BOOK HEROES

Chapter Six
The Fantastic Four

It is ironic that the most significant revolution in comics since the inception of super-heroes began as an act of overt imitation. The legend has it that Jack Leibowitz, publisher of DC Comics, once played a round of golf with an acquaintance named Martin Goodman. Goodman was the publisher of a number of slick-paper magazines, along with a minor, flounder ing line of comic books. Goodman's comic line was so minor, in fact, that it no longer even had a house name or trademark. At that time—early 1961—it was known simply as the Canam Publishers Sales Corporation.

During the course of the game Liebowitz happened to mention his latest commercial success, the *Justice League of America*. That made an impression on Goodman. He had abandoned super-heroes years before as a dead market, giving his comics over to westerns, romance, and monster stories. Now he wondered if he were missing something. When he returned to his office he called in his comic book editor, art director, and head writer—who, at Canam Publishers Sales Corporation, were all one person, his cousin-in-law Stan Lee—and ordered him to whip up an imitation of the Justice League.

As it turned out, however, Stan Lee had recently been joined by the powerful creative force of artist/writer Jack Kirby, and, soon after, he himself made the biggest creative decision of his career, and what Goodman got back was not what he expected. It was indeed a comic book about a team of superheroes, and it did have a cover vaguely resembling that of the JLA. But this new group, this Fantastic Four, was like no set of heroes anyone had every seen. They had the powers of heroes, true, but they didn t act like heroes. They acted, in fact, almost like real people.

The Fantastic Four were created when scientist Reed Richards, determined to beat the Reds to the moon, took his fiancee Sue Storm, her little brother Johnny, and an argumentative pilot named Ben Grimm on an ill-fated flight in a home-made rocket, bombarded by cosmic rays. The four crashlanded (as in Kirby's *Challengers*) and then discover that the mysterious rays have given them amazing powers. Reed's body stretches like rubber (a power borrowed from Schwartz s Elongated Man). Sue can turn invisible. Johnny bursts into flame and begins to fly (becoming, as with Schwartz s Flash, a modern version of a 1940s hero) while Ben becomes a mosntrous muscle-man with rocky orange flesh. They promptly pledge themselves to the defense of mankind, following old super-hero tradition (*FF* #1, Nov. 1961). But there the tradition ends. Super-heroes had always worn costumes and used secret identities, but the Fantastic Four fought monsters and aliens in their street clothes, and—although taking the dramatic titles Mr. Fantastic, the Invisible Girl, the Human Torch, and the Thing—they never considered concealing their true identities. Heroes never quarrelled with one another, yet the Human Torch and the Thing were always at each other's throats. Except for bland junior sidekicks, heroes were adults. But the Torch was a car-crazy

teenager with a healthy distrust of his elders.

Most of all, heroes were handsome and well-loved by the world, more content with their lives than most of us can ever expect to be. Until 1961, no comic writer would have suggested that acquiring strange powers might drive a wedge between a man and his society, bringing him more misery than contentment. But Ben Grimm, who would call himself only the Thing, had paid for his powers with an unalterably monstrous appearance, not all the world's wonder could console him for the loss of his humanity. Resenting the world as strongly as he felt bound to protect it, he had to struggle as fiercely against his own bitterness and self-pity as against any villain. This was a turning point in comic book characterization.

That such a comic book could have come to exist at all is remarkable, but that it came from a company like Goodman's was especially shocking at the time. For years his small staff had been following the winds of fashion, churning out formula science fiction when science fiction was selling, formula westerns when westerns were selling. Following a cut back in 1957, their most noteworthy creations were a handful of Saturday Matinee-style monster titles. Yet suddenly they attempted the most radical change in adventure comics since the beginning of the Golden Age. And the motive for the change, surprisingly, was not so much commercial as personal, on the part of scripter/editor Stan Lee and plotter/artist Jack Kirby.

Lee was unique among the men who shared the Silver Age. He had begun his career as an office boy for Goodman at the age of seventeen in 1939. Soon he began filling in as writer, then an editor, until eventually the whole show was his. Never a pulp writer or a science fiction editor, never a client of Julius Schwartz or an associate of Mort Weisinger, he was the only prominent writer or editor in the field who had been with comic books for his entire working life. (In that sense he was the prototype of the young people who dominate the field now, so many of whom have leapt directly from fan to professional status). And it was this unique relationship with his field that made him the one man who could change the face of the medium completely.

In the Golden Age, when Goodman's company was usually called Timely Comics, three dominant heroes made deep impressions on young Stan's sensibilities. Bill Everett's Sub-Mariner, more anti-hero than hero, was the half-breed offspring of the queen of an undersea race and a human ship's captain, who often assaulted the cities of surface-people to avenge the despoliation of his beloved ocean. The android Human Torch started life as a misfit in society, whose ability to turn his body in flame at first threatened to be more of a danger than a blessing to mankind. These two not-quite heroes fought a series of elemental battles against one another in the early 1940s, with neither clearly cast as good or evil. The third Timely hero, Captain America, created by the team of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, was a living political symbol, war-time America's picture of itself, a colorful mouthpiece of patriotic sentiments.

The elements embodied in these characters—the anti-hero at odds with society, the super-powered being who is frail at heart, heroes who fight one another, and the hero as social or political symbol—were to remain in Lee's mind through the 1960s.

During the slump of the 1950s, when first superheroes were swept away by poor sales and then meaty horror stories were exterminated by public outcry against unsavory comics, Lee found himself grinding



Art on pages 4-5 © 1961, 1962 Marvel Comics Group

out reams of brainless stories in genres he cared nothing about. His attention began drifting to other sources of income: Advertising copy, news billers and magazine humor. But then, at the age of thirty-nine, a conversation with his wife changed the course of his career.

"Joan wanted me to bear down and make something of myself in the comic book field," he relates. "She wondered why I didn't put as much effort and creativity into the comics as I seemed to be putting into my other free-lance endeavors. The fact is, I had always thought of my comic book work as a temporary job—even after all those years—and her little dissertation made me suddenly realize that it was time to start concentrating on what I was doing—to carve a real career for myself in the nowhere world of comic books."

Joan's timing could not have been better. Kirby had recently returned to the fold, determined to create something startling and unprecedented, something "with a real human dimension," to reverse the company's fortunes. A short while later Goodman asked Lee for the superhero team. He and Kirby seized their opportunity: conditions were right for a revolution. After all, with a comics line like Goodman's there was very little to lose, giving them a freedom to experiment that their rivals at prosperous DC would never have. And so they refused to run off a conceptual Xerox of the Justice League. "No, this was to be something different—something special," Lee says, "something to stupefy my publisher, startle my public, and satisfy my wife's desire to 'prove myself' in my own little sphere." With *The Fantastic Four* Lee did something that no one else in comics would have considered: He wrote for himself. Lacking the avenues of short stories and novels open to men like Fox and Binder, he knew that if he were ever to say something of his own to the world, it would have to be through his super-heroes.

Goodman had reservations about the new comics, but he let Lee have his way. In the late summer of 1961, *Fantastic Four* Number 1 hit the stands, laying the conerstone of a remarkable publishing success story. After more than twenty years of Lee's powerful influence in the field, it is difficult to appreciate the impact that first issue must have had on the young superhero fan spinning the rack in search of something new to read. Turning from the Justice League to Superman, for example, would have been an obvious shift to a different editorial style. But turning from them to the Fantastic Four was like stepping through the gateway to another dimension. Lee and Kirby did use a few of Schwartz's ideas, such as the Golden Age revival and the stretchable hero, but the emphasis of their stories was completely reversed. In their work plot, pace, and mystery were shunted into the background while their brawling, bickering heroes took center stage, soaking the pages in pathos, anger, and romantic melodrama. Lee's writing was often rough, self-contradictory, and overdone. Perhaps his large workload prevented him from workin carefully on any one project; and perhaps he was hampered by being both writer and editor, for there was no one to catch him in his failings or smooth his work out. But for him, next craftsmanship was of far less consequence than innovation and raw enthusiasm. It was a risky alternative to put before the kids of America. But for a couple of reasons it worked.

One reason was Jack Kirby. After leaving *Challengers of the Unknown* he had paused briefly to help his old partner Joe Simon kick off Archie Comics' attempt to get in on the hero business with a couple of minor costumed charaters called the Fly and Private Lancelot Strong. Next he found his way back to Lee's offices (where he had worked in the early 1940s) in 1959, where his ability to plot and draw a lot of pages in a short time promptly made him the company's principal artist. Of the many types of stories that he cranked out with Lee, those with the most distinctively fantastic, grandiose Kirby stamp were talkes of monsters with names like Xom, Grottu, and the Creature from Krogarr. (Many of these monsters crept into the earlier





issues of *Fantastic Four* when, as often happened, Lee and Kirby were unable to think up any original foes for their heroes.)

Taking advantage of Kirby's background as a writer/artist, Lee conceived a method of story creation that would set his comics still further apart from the rest of the field. In the time-honored comic book method, the writer submitted a detailed script to the artist, who then illustrated it faithfully. Lee, however, only discussed the story with Kirby, who then turned it into a cohesive visual story as he saw fit. As a final step, Lee wrote in the dialogue and captions. This freed Lee from the chore of plotting stories, which had grown onerous for him over the years, and let him give nearly all his attention to the charaterizations and human interaction he preferred. At first this new system took its toll, for Kirby would often stick to his straight-ahead action style of plotting, forcing Lee to cram his emotional angles into brief scenes overcrowded with verbiage (in *FF* #3, March 1962, Lee wanted the Torch to leave the team in anger, but had no room for development or foreshadowing, and so had him suddenly and unconvincingly turn angry and buzz off in the last three panels). (This sharing of labor also poses a difficult problem to the historian trying to establish credit for the FF's creation, especially considering that Lee and Kirby both argue for full honors. Based upon the other work of both men, however, it seems reasonable to suppose that the origin, essence, and adventures of the team were mainly Kirby's invention, while the melodrama and emotional nuances were Lee's.) But as the two got into the swing of collaboration, they came to use the system for a free-flowing interplay of ideas that made Lee's comics more than any others' visual creations as much as verbal ones.

Because Kirby drew so much for Lee, his art in the early 1960s suffered from muddiness and roughness (further impaired by a weak and overworked staff of inkers, including Dick Ayers, Chic Stone, Paul Reinman, and George Roussos), and his plots—usually full-issue length—were often unevenly paced and repetitive. The company's cheap production quality, with the excessive use of gray in coloring and poor printing



techniques, further contributed to the sub-standard look of the new comic. But none of it seemed to matter against Kirby's tough, vigorous action and the ambitious drama of Stan Lee. And in that ambition lay the second reason for the Fantastic Four's success.

The number of older comic book readers had been growing since the Flash first appeared. Many of them were teenagers, still fascinated by the sheer fantasy of super-heroes but becoming aware of the real emotional stresses of living. And being teenagers, they were less comforted by familiarity than children and were hungry for change. To an adolescent eye, DC's comics often seemed simplistic and cliched. Lee's conceptions came like a flash of lightning. Heroes were human too, they could suffer and still be heroes; and comic books could experiment, could even aspire to be taken seriously. The FF gripped an audience smaller than DC's but generally older, more vocal, and more conscious of what they read. Letters began arriving, unsolicited, at Lee's little office. He promptly instated a Fantastic Four Fan Page, bearing such messages as "You are definitely starting a new trend in comics: characters who act like real people, not just lily-white do-gooders who would insult the average reader's intelligence." (Marvel staffer Dick Ayers has reported that many of those early fan letters were in fact written by Lee himself; but some, including one from DC fan Roy Thomas, were undoubtedly real).

The fans forced Lee and Kirby into a couple of compromises with super-hero traditions—they had to give their quartet skin-tight costumes and a super-scientific headquarters—but most of the experiments were welcomed, and more demanded. They obliged them in Issue 4 with the return of the original Sub-Mariner (shortly after Schwartz revived the Flash of Earth II), the first entry of an anti-hero into the Silver Age. The Sub-Mariner declared war on all mankind, and therefore had to be fought as a villain. But his motivation—vengance for the devastation of his people by an underwater atomic test—could not be dismissed as simple villainy. His tragic nobility also appealed to Sue Storm, the Invisible Girl, who grew infatuated with him—beginning three years of discord with her teammates and tension with her fiance.

Here was a whole new complex of ideas: Heroes who might be wrong, who are ambivalent about their enemy, who disagree about their plan of action, who are even caught in a romantic triangle with a villain. The fans were ecstatic.

The Sub-Mariner returned in Issue 9 for a story that, even after twenty years of innovation in comics, remains remarkably off-beat. In a few bad stock speculations Reed Richards, Mr. Fantastic, loses all the team's money and gets them evicted from their skyscraper headquarters. Their only recourse is to hire themselves out as actors in a science fiction movie being promoted by a mysterious movie mogul. The mogul proves to be the Sub-Mariner, maneuvering them into position to attack them... not—as the traditional villain would do—to destroy them, but only to assuage his wounded pride for his earlier defeat at their hands. He battles them all to a standstill and goes his lonely way back into the sea.

When the Fantastic Four's quick success prompted Lee and Kirby to bring out a second super-hero title, it is not surprising that they produced a character still less like the traditional good guy. A blend of Dr. Jekyll and the Frankenstein monster, the new character was a respectable scientist named Bruce Banner who changed periodically into the incredible Hulk, a powerful green-skinned brute whose twisted mind was capable only of thoughts of destruction. The Hulk was a step beyond the Thing as a product of Lee and Kirby's fascination with the idea of physical superiority as a wall between the hero and humanity. His only contact with mankind was a teenager named Rick Jones, whose sympathy was barely able to penetrate the Hulk's hate-clouded brain. (*Hulk* #1, May 1962).

But Lee had perhaps launched the new character too quickly, for he seemed to have little idea just what to do with it. Soon ceasing to be an eloquent but evil Dr. Jekyll sort, the Hulk became an inarticulate brute on a perpetual rampage, then fell under Rick Jones's mental domination through a freak accident (*Hulk* #3, Sept. 1962). Next he was bombarded by a ray that gave him the mind of Bruce Banner along with the strength of the Hulk, but then the bestial side returned as the Hulk again thought of himself as a separate entity, scorning







Banner and his entire working species (*Hulk* #5, Jan. 1963). His adventures also suffered because, although the character was cast as an anti-hero with no concern for human society, Lee insisted upon pitting him against evil communists; thus three of the Hulk's six issues involved ill-conceived battles with implausible Cold War stereotypes of Reds. Perhaps because of this poor planning—or perhaps because even Lee's followers were not yet ready for a protagonist so far from the heroic ideal—the Hulk did not enjoy the Fantastic Four's success.

There is no denying that the early products of what was to become the Marvel Comics Group left much to be desired in the realms of imagination, plot complexity, and polish. Even a mediocre Julius Schwartz comic showed far more craftsmanship than the best Lee and Kirby work of 1961 or 1962. But the raw vitality and enthusiasm of Lee's scripting and Kirby's art were infectious, and the kids took them to their hearts for their impish war on convention.

Lee himself was not the type to sit shyly in the corner waiting for someone to notice him. The cover of the third issue of the FF screamed "The Greatest Comic Magazine in the World!!" Every issue from then on was mantled with a similar motto, and from there the self-advertisements only grew more emphatic. From a forgotten corner of the industry, after twenty years of creative stagnation, Lee would scream and joke and innovate his way to an unequalled position of influence in less than a decade. His work was filled with hype and pretension, crudity and excess. But it was equally full of sincerity, invention, humor and love. In his comics characters was everything, and his characters became more solid, beloved and believable, more independent of their creator, than any before them in their medium. When he took us on an eleven-page "Visit with the Fantastic Four," in which nothing but conversation took place, he made it as interesting as any battle with a monster or mad scientist (*FF* #11, Feb. 1963). Stan Lee remains, arguably, the most controversial figure in the history of comics.

It would be with his third creation that Lee would discover not only his audience but his own greatest talents. With the Amazing Spider-Man he would find the key to unlock the deepest fantasies of his adolescent readers, launching his comics company on its long upward climb.

WILL JACOBS and *GERARD JONES* are the authors of The Beaver Papers (Crown Publishers, 1983) and a show of parodies for the National Lampoon. The preceding chapter is an excerpt from The Comic Book Heroes, a massive critical history of American super-hero and adventure comics from 1956 to the present, which Crown will be releasing in the Summer of 1985.





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THE GOLDEN AGE DIRECTORY

Installment 6: The Flash, the Lantern, and the Torch

And once again, welcome to the GOLDEN AGE DIRECTORY, where we search out, source, and index Golden Age superhero reprints for your enjoyment and information. This time out we cover four Justice Society members, one of the Seven Soldiers of Victory, and Timely's most popular hero, the Human Torch. (For you newer readers, Timely is the name used to refer to Marvel Comics in the 1940s.)

The Flash was the first member of the Justice Society proper to be revived in the 1960s, and he was one of the first to be reprinted by DC, in *Flash Annual* #1, 1963. Green Lantern came along a bit later, though his origin was reprinted in Jules Feiffer's *Great Comic Book Heroes* in '65; both benefited from DC's massive Golden Age reprint project in the early to mid-'70s, and from Dynapubs' *Flashback* series. The same can be said for Hawkman, who, artwise, is far superior to the other two; check out the earlier reprints for the Sheldon Moldoff artwork that made everybody a Hawkman fan back in the '40s. Hourman was no great shakes, but due to his membership in the Justice Society, he managed to field a few reprints; much the same can be said of Green Arrow.

One hidden delight may be found in the Green Lama reprints. The three stories taken from *Green Lama* all feature art by Mac Raboy, famous for his excellent rendering of Captain Marvel, Jr., and are well worth the trouble of seeking them out.

The Human Torch is of great interest to the Marvel historian-Invaders fan, and most of the stories are pretty fun. The really good art doesn't commence until the '50s, with Dick Ayers's rendition, but the two Torch-Subby encounters from *Marvel Mystery* are justifiably classics, even though the last page is dropped from the *Invaders* reprint. The big 60-page battle in *Human Torch*, for all its sound and fury, is pretty mediocre. Caveat emptor.

Next time out we'll have a mixed bag of heroes, including Ibis the Invincible, Johnny Thunder, Kid Eternity, and the most famed Golden Age group of all, the Justice Society of America.

On to the Index!



THE FLASH

All-Flash #13, Winter 1943
(*DC 100-Page Super-Spectacular* #DC-22, Nov. 1973)
"Campaign Against the Flash"—40 pgs.

All-Flash #22, Apr.-May 1976
(*Four Star Spectacular* #1, Mar.-Apr 1976)
"The City of Shifting Sand"—13 pgs.
(*DC Super-Stars* #5, July 1976)
"Deal Me From the Bottom"—13 pgs.

All-Flash #30, Aug.-Sept. 1947
(*Flash* #216, June 1972)
"Anything Can Happen"—12 pgs.

All-Flash #31, Oct. 1947
(*Flash* #229, Sept.-Oct 1974)
"The Secret City"—12 pgs.

All Flash #32, Dec. 1947/Jan. 1948
(*Flash Annual* #1, 1963)
"The Amazing Star Sapphire"—12 pgs.
(*Flash* #160, Apr. 1966)
"Duet of Danger"—13 pgs.

All-Star Comics #1, Summer 1940
(*Flashback* #22, Dynapubs)
["A Case of Murder"]—8 pgs.

All-Star Comics #2, Fall 1940
(*Flashback* #13, Dynapubs)
["Mystery of the Deserted Newspaper"]—8 pgs.

Flash Comics #1, Jan. 1940
(*The Great Comic Book Heroes*, Feiffer, 1965)
(*Famous First Edition* #F-8, Aug.-Sept. 1975)
(*Secret Origins of the Super DC Heroes* 1976)

By PETER LUST, STEVE JOHNSON, and LOU MOUGIN

["Origin of the Flash"]—15 pgs.

Flash Comics #15, Mar. 1941
(*Flashback* #36, Dynapubs)
["Circus Adventure"]—11 pgs.

Flash Comics#90, Dec. 1947
(*80 Page Giant* #4, Oct. 1964)
"Nine Empty Uniforms"—12 pgs.

Flash Comics #94, Apr. 1948
(*Flash* #232, Mar.-Apr. 1975)
"The Images of Doom"—12 pgs.

Flash Comics#104, Feb. 1949
(*Flash* #211, Dec. 1971)
"The Rival Flash"—12 pgs.

Unpublished Golden Age story
(*Flash* #205, Apr. 1971)
"Journey Into Danger"

Unpublished Golden Age story
(*Flash* #214, Apr. 1972)
"The Tale of the Three Tokens"—12 pgs.

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

Air Fighters Comics #2, Nov. 1942
(*Comic Reprints, Oklahoma*)
["Rescue"]—8 pgs.

THE GAY GHOST (a.k.a. THE GRIM GHOST)

Sensation Comics #1, Jan 1941
(*Limited Collector's Edition* #C-30, 1974)
["Origin of the Gay Ghost"]—13 pgs.

Sensation Comics #8, Aug. 1942
(*World's Finest Comics* #212, June 1972)
["The Skull Pilots"]—9 pgs.

GHOST PATROL

Flash Comics #96, June 1948
(*World's Finest Comics* #208, Dec. 1971)
"The Spectacular Crimes"—7 pgs.

GOLDEN ARROW

Whiz Kids #2, Feb.1940
(*Famous First Edition* #F-4, Oct.-Nov. 1974)
"Introducing The Golden Arrow"—10 pgs.

GREEN ARROW

Adventure Comics#174, Mar. 1952
(*Brave and the Bold* #117, Feb.-Mar. 1975)
"1,001 Ways To Defeat Green Arrow"—8 pgs.

Adventure Comics #176, May 1952
(*World's Finest Comics* #204, Aug. 1971)
"The Roque of 1,000 Ropes"]—8 pgs.

Adventure Comics #186, Mar.1953
(*Brave and the Bold* #113, June-July 1974)
"The World's Most Dangerous Arrow"—8 pgs.

More Fun Comics #89, Mar. 1943
(*Secret Origins of the Super DC Heroes*, 1976)
"The Birth of the Battling Bowmen"—13 pgs.

World's Finest Comics #7, Fall 1942
(*Flashback* #28, Dynapubs)
"Wings of Flame"—13 pgs.

World's Finest Comics #8, Winter 1942
(*Flashback* #38, Dynapubs)
"The Unluckiest Man in The World"—13 pgs.

GREEN HORNET

Green Hornet Comics #29, Mar. 1946
(*Near Mint* #7, Dec. 1980)
"The Mummy Murders"]—10 pgs.

GREEN LAMA

Green Lama #1, Dec. 1944
(*Golden Age Collector* #2)
"The Court of Crime"—12 pgs.

Green Lama #2, Feb. 1945
(*Golden Age Collector* #3)
"Willie the Sleeper"—12 pgs.

Green Lama #3, Apr. 1945
(*Daring Aventures* #17, 1964)
"The Riddle of Toys"—12 pgs.

Prize Comics #12, July 1941
(*Golden Age Review*)
["Sing Po, Oriental Racketeer"]—8 pgs.

GREEN LANTERN

All-American Comics #16, July 1940
(*The Great Comic Book Heroes*, Feiffer, 1965)
(*Secret Origins of the Super DC Heroes*, 1976)
["Origin of the Green Lantern"]—8 pgs.

All-American Comics #24, Mar. 1941
(*Flashback* #30, Dynapubs)
["R.J. Karn's Slave Racket"]—10 pgs.

All-American Comics #61 Oct. 1944
(*Wanted* #4, Dec. 1972)
"Fighters Never Quit"—12 pgs.

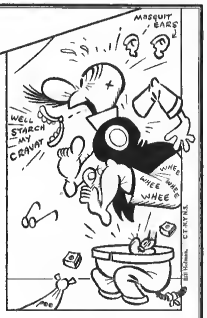
All-American Comics #89, Sept. 1947
(*World's Finest Comics* #211, May 1972)
"The Harlequin"—12 pgs.

All-American Comics #92, Dec. 1947
(*Green Lantern* #86, Oct.-Nov. 1971)

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"The End of Sports"—12 pgs.

All-Star Comics #2, Fall, 1940
(*Flashback* #13, Dynapubs)
["The Human Robots"]—7 pgs.

Green Lantern #37, Mar.-Apr. 1949
(*Detective Comics* #440, Apr.-May 1974)
"Too Many Suspects"—12 pgs.

Green Lantern #38, May-June 1949
(*Green Lantern* #89, Apr.-May 1972)
"The Impossible Mr. Paradox"—12 pgs.

Unpublished Golden Age story
(*Green Lantern* #88, Feb.-Mar. 1972)
"The Menace of the Marching Toys" —12 pgs.

Unpublished Golden Age story
(*Amazing World of DC Comics* #3)
"Safety First"—10 pgs.

THE HANGMAN

Pep Comics #17, July, 1941
(*Flashback* #16, Dynapubs)
["Origin of the Hangman"]—11 pgs.
NOTE: This story guest-stars The Comet.

Special Comics #1, Winter 1941
(*Flashback* #4, Dynapubs)
"Special Case #1—13 pgs.
"Special Case #2"—12 pgs.
(*Flashback* #4, Dynapubs)
(Magnificent Superheroes of Comics, Golden Age, 1977)
"Special Case #3"]—12 pgs.

HAWKMAN

All-Star Comics #1, Summer 1940
(*Flashback* #22, Dynapubs)
["Zombies of the Welsh Mountains"]—8 pgs.

All-Star Comics #2, Fall 1940
(*Flashback* #13, Dynapubs)
["The Aztec Rain God"]—8 pgs.

All-Star Comics #27, Winter 1945
(*Joe Kubert: A Golden Age Index*, Dellinger, 1980)
["Young Warrior in a Wheelchair"]—5 pgs.
NOTE: This is actually the Hawkman portion of a Justice Society story.

All-Star Comics #33, Feb.-Mar. 1947
(*Joe Kubert: A Golden Age Index*, Dellinger, 1980)
["Hawkman Vs. Solomon Grundy"]—3 pgs.
NOTE: This is actually the Hawkman portion of a Justice Society story.

All-American Comics #24, Mar. 1941
(*Flashback* #30, Dynapubs)
["R.J. Karn's Slave Racket"]—10 pgs.

Flash Comics #1, Jan. 1940
(*Famous First Edition #F-9*, Aug.-Sept. 1975)
(*Secret Origins of the Super DC Heroes*, 1976)
["The Origin of Hawkman"]—12 pgs.

Flash Comics #5, May 1940
(*The Great Comic Book Heroes*, Feiffer, 1965)
["The Kidnapping of Ione Crail"]—10 pgs.

Flash Comics #12, Dec. 1940
(*Hawkman #2.5*, Apr.-May 1968)
["The Heart-Patient Horror"]—8 pgs.

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HOURMAN

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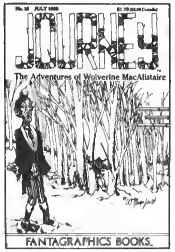
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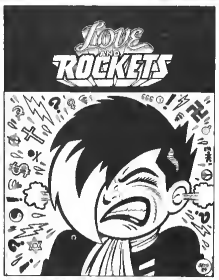


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COMICS IN REVIEW

R.A. Jones on Camelot 3000 #12, Lockheed the Dragon #1, Spaced #3-#6, Megaton Man #1, Omaha the Cat Dancer #1, and Brother Power the Geek Special #1.

ALL'S WELL . . .

CAMELOT 3000 #12
written by MIKE W. BARR
illustrated by BRIAN BOLLAND
inked by TERRY AUSTIN
colored by TATJANA WOOD
edited by LEN WEIN
DC Comics
$1.25

All right—let's go ahead and get the big gripe out of the way first. It is inexcusable that DC allowed the final issue of this maxi-series to be delayed for such an incredibly long time. Nine months have elapsed since the last issue appeared on the stands—nearly as long as this entire series should have required to run its full length. That means this single issue was produced at what would be an average speed of one page per week! That would be a snail's pace even if the thing had been written, penciled, inked, lettered and colored by a single person.

The first issue of the series bore a cover date of December, 1982, and showed evidence that this would be DC's crowning achievement. Then, missed deadlines began to disrupt the flow of the story. Finally, the delay between issues became so lengthy that readers forgot there even was a story. A dozen other series have come and gone in the interim—most not nearly as good, but at least appearing on schedule.

I won't attempt to lay the blame for the foul-ups on any one person. I lack both the knowledge and the desire to do so; at this point it would be little more than an exercise in pique.

Enough. Laying aside the extraneous garbage, how does this final chapter measure up? Rather well, in my opinion. I have heard some complaints that it suffers from the same affliction affecting the last issue of Marvel's *Secret Wars*—having too much crowded in, just to tie up loose ends. I think this is simply a matter of individual perception. While not taking the time to re-read the entire series, I did do so



CAMELOT 2000 #12: At long long last!

with issue #11, and found the events in issue #12 to progress very naturally from that point.

Scripter Mike W. Barr has done a good job on both *Batman* and *the Outsiders* and the *Star Trek* and the *Batman Annual* he wrote contained one of the finest stories that character has seen since the days of Englehart and Rogers—but for my money, *Camelot 3000* has been his magnum opus, representing his most sustained level of creative excellence.

Barr used one of science fiction's (and comics') hoariest plot devices—the alien invasion of Earth—to set the stage for this series, then promptly made the wise decision to push that part of the story into the background. Instead, he focused on the much more interesting personal conflicts of the major characters. His portrayal of Merlin as an enigmatic mixture of good and evil was intriguing. I even found myself feeling occasional twinges of sympathy for the villainess, Morgan LeFay. The eternal themes of illicit love, human weakness, and noble redemption found in the triad of King Arthur, Guinevere, and Lancelot are as compelling now as they were in centuries past.

For me, the most riveting conflict throughout the series has been that revolving around Tristan—the knight who found himself reincarnated in the body of a woman. Her personal struggle has been most fascinating. I truly feared that her dilemma would be resolved in a safe, conventional manner. To my delight, it was ended in a way which, while it may offend the sensitivities of some, to me seemed perfectly natural and satisfying.

While my vocabulary is reasonably voluminous, I find myself totally lacking in the adjectives that would be necessary to properly complement a description of Brian Bolland's art. Stated simply, he is easily one of the finest artists in the comics industry, if not *the* finest. In many ways, his art is similar in appearance to that of Neal Adams, yet even cleaner and more finely detailed. He has mastered every requisite for being an outstanding graphic artist. He is an excellent visual storyteller, is capable of por-

traying the entire range of human emotions and is equally facile at depicting both action-packed scenes and quiet moments.

In the recent past I have complained of inker Terry Austin's occassional tendency to sublimate his own style too much, but in this book he seems to have found the perfect middle ground. He provides solid support for Bolland without going too far and distorting the artist's natural style in any way.

Ifayou are like me, you no doubt were angered by the interminable delays on this series, but I urge you to set aside that anger and pick up this final issue. Taken as a whole, *Camelot 3000* still ranks as one of DC's finest moments—a series any fan should be proud to have in his collection.

PUFF, MOVE OVER

LOCKHEED THE DRAGON #1
written by MICKEY SPILLANE
illustrated by JIM STERANKO
colored by GLYNIS WEIN
edited by ANN NOCENTI
Marvel Comics
75¢

It was inevitable. I suppose. Marvel has milked the popularity of the X-Men for all it's worth—or at least I thought they had, until the first issue of this bizarre limited series fell into my hands. When I saw this (admittedly cute) dragon grinning at me from the cover, I experienced an almost irresistible urge to rip the thing to shreds.

I'm glad I fought that urge.

From the time he was introduced in the pages of *X-Men*, it has been plain to most readers that there was more to this creature than met the eye. Just how much more there was, I dare say, none of us suspected. With this opening chapter, the veil of secrecy begins to part.

As many of us have no doubt suspected, Lockheed, despite his physical appearance, is not an animal—well, actually, he *is* an animal, but one with human-level intelligence. Despite this, the race of dragons from which Lockheed is descended has been ruthlessly hunted as if its members were no more than mindless beasts. Apparently, galactic folklore has it that powdered dragon wing has remarkable curative powers. Thus, the creatures have been hunted to near extinction.

Lockheed had escaped the slaughter, finding refuge on a planet called Cephalon. Ultimately, he was forced to flee this sanctuary as well, accused by the authorities of being a pan-dimensional peddler of illicit drugs. A bullet-headed law enforcement officer from that planet has now tracked Lockheed to Earth. Also on his trail is a beautiful but deadly female bounty hunter, who is in the employ of a mysterious figure back on Cephalon. Adding to the mystery are hints dropped along the way, which seem to indicate Lockheed may indeed be guilty of the crime of which he is accused.

This outrageous first issue is truly mind-boggling—as are the artistic credits. Providing the script for this four-issue series is none other than Mickey Spillane—no doubt known to you either as the author of the Mike Hammer detective novels, or as the star of several Lite Beer commercials. Whay you may not know is that, more than 40 years ago, Spillane also wrote for a comic book company that eventually grew up to become Marvel Comics.

So what would entice a highly successful novelist to return to comics? Never underestimate the power of a precocious little dragon. It seems that Spillane has long been a secret admirer of the character, and himself approached Marvel with the series proposal. They of course jumped at the offer.

Spillane has opted to write the series in the same style he employs in his novels. The story is narrated by Lockheed, thus affording us our first look into the critter's mind and personality. Lockheed has lost none of his loveability, but at the same time has gained a rougher side as well. There can be no doubt about the conviction behind his statement that "You don't mess around with this dragon."

One revelation may shock and even unnerve some people. It regards the reason Lockheed attached himself to Kitty Pryde and returned with her to Earth. So as not to give away too much, I'll simply say that this could well send censors into a frenzy.

Upon hearing of Spillane's decision to script the series, artist Jim Steranko was the first of many noted pencillers to volunteer for duty on the book. Steranko too has been largely absent from comics for may years, but he has long displayed an interest in the pulp-style illustrations so suitable to accompany Spillane's prose. His efforts here show that the passing years have certainly not dimmed his artistic ability. His heavily shadowed illustrations give the book a film noir look that makes it a visual feast. It is art which gives pictorial definition to the word "atmosphere."

With a compelling storyline, hard-hitting narrative, and outstanding art, *Lockheed the Dragon* promises to be the hottest series of 1985. I strongly suggest that you run—do not walk!—to your nearest comic shop. This book will sell out faster than a corrupt politician. Be warned.

REALLY SPACED OUT

SPACED #3-6
written by JOHN WILLIAMS
illustrated by TOM STAZER
Unbridled Ambition
$1.60

Have you ever attended a comic book convention? If not, you really should. You never know who you might meet there. For instance (you knew this was all leading somewhere, didn't you)- a couple of months back, at a convention in Dallas, I met a pair of gentlemen named Williams and Stazer. Nice guys, who just happened to be the creative team behind a comic entitled *Spaced*. I admitted to them that I had never even heard of the book, and they were considerate enough to give me some copies for the purpose of this review.

Spaced is science fiction satire. The story revolves around the crew of the USS *Pragmatic*, a spaceship built in the shape of a portable hair-dryer. The central character is a blue-skinned alien named Lap, a poor fella trying his best to remain on an even keel, though all about him is madness. There is Captain Orson Grok, the incompetent commander of the vessel, who couldn't find "up" if he was standing at the bottom of a well. There is Barbara Ample, who at first suffered from a rather unhealthy attachment to the ship's computer



(which, by the way, prefers to be addressed as "God").

And then there's Snikt, the ship's security officer, who bears a striking resemblance to a certain sociopathic X-Man. Snikt is also the best at what he does—screwing up. The guy's an idiot, a complete mental vacuum. As such, he is the source of a great deal of the humor in the series, making him my favorite of the characters.

This book spoofs, in a fairly lowbrow way, just about everything from *Star Trek* to *Alien*, and from mutants to Ernie Kovacs. Like any attempt at humor, it sometimes misses the mark; but when it hits, it is very, very funny. If I could recommend only one issue to introduce you to the series, it would be #4, by far the best of those I have read. It involves a court-martial onboard the ship. The scenes of Snikt-as prosecutor are hilarious, as is the one involving a witness who is a self-described "connasewa" of the female breast, having studied every pair on the ship."

In scanning several issues which cover a span of many months, it is easy to see that artist Tom Stazer's style and skill are still evolving. His characterization of Lip reminds me of Bob Aull's "Mants" (a cartoon feature I have seen in various men's magazines), but the rest of the work bears his own distinctive mark. He seems to be steadily improving. This black and white strip would work just as well in color.

With occasional biting humor to spice the gentle satire, *Spaced* provides you with a few minutes of genuine fun. You won't roll on the floor with convulsive laughter, but you will find yourself smiling a lot. It's a simple pleasure, much as a cup of hot cocoa might be on a cold night—and equally likely to leave you with a nice, warm glow.

One thing—*Spaced* is the product of a small publishing venture, and so you may not see it at your local comic shop (I certainly hadn't). If not, but you think you'd like to, ask your dealer to order a copy. Which brings me to an invitation I'd like to make (if my editors don't mind). I attempt to review as many different comics as I possibly can, but I can inadvertently overlook a title such as *Spaced* simply because my local comic shops don't carry it. Fortunately the people involved with certain titles are sometimes kind enough to send me copies of their product (which led to several of the reviews last issue, for example).

So, if you're publishing a book you feel the fans should know about, by all means send me a copy, in care of **AMAZING HEROES**. Such a courtesy is always appreciated (I love freebies!). Naturally, I won't guarantee that your book will receive a favorable review, but I can promise it will get as much consideration and honest appraisal as any title from the "Big Two." End of solicitation.

INSANITY IS FUN

MEGATON MAN #1
written and illustrated by
DONALD SIMPSON
colored by RAY FAHRENBACH
edited by DENIS KITCHEN
Kitchen Sink Press
$2.00

No wonder all we get on *The Tonight Show* is Joan Rivers—all the other comedians are busy producing comic books nowadays. Satire is surging, parody is proliferating, guffaws are growing, repartee is rampant . . . and alliteration is getting totally out of hand.

Which is just my usual convoluted way of saying that there's another "funny" book on the stands—*Megaton Man*. This is a book that boldly goes where no man—except Fred Hembeck, Valentino, and a few dozen other writers—has gone before: back to the Silver Age of Marvel and DC. There seems to be a growing clique of creators who have mind-locked onto the year 1962. That's not a complaint, mind you, the early '60s were an exciting time. People were beginning to turn on (without yet dropping out), the New Frontier loomed ahead, and Camelot was real to a generation not yet dulled by the grinding wheel of cynicism.

It was a fun time for comics as well. DC was still riding high on the wave of popularity which had carried it to the top of the comics heap, while across the street a gang of upstarts named Lee, Kirby, and Ditko were creating a whole new brand of excitement. It was the time when many of today's comics professionals first fell in love with the medium. The same fond nostalgia that is behind the works of Hembeck and Valentino's *normalman* is obviously at work in *Megaton Man*.

Donald Simpson is an exceptionally fine cartoonist. I would place his artwork very nearly on a level with that of another cartoonist who may well have been one of his major influences—Mort Drucker, the outstanding caricaturist who for many years has produced gems for *Mad* magazine.

As I said, *Megaton Man* spoofs all the old hallmarks of the early Marvel and DC comics. Megaton Man is a grotesquely muscular hero who is the sole survivor of a dying world, was exposed to mysterious cataclysmic rays, raised by a tribe of intelligent kangaroos, bitten by a radioactive frog, caught in a space-time continuum blast, drank a top secret premium soldier syrup, and was radiated by galactic energy. In other words—he is your typical comic book superhero.

The end product is one very funny comic. Simpson is dead on target with his humor, exposing all the silliness of that era (much of which is still present today). His art complements the story well, notably in the portrayal of Megaton Man's arch foe, Doctor Software, a mad professor who looks like Jerry Lewis. Also striking is the President of the United States—an Orson Welles doppelganger. Like many of the better cartoonists (such as Dave Sim), Simpson offers ample evidence that he would be equally suited to "straight" art.

Storywise, I would put *Megaton Man* on a par with the delightful *normalman*, with the art scoring even higher. I do detect a possible marketing flaw inherent in both titles. Since the bulk of their humor derives from satirizing DC and Marvel comics, I assume the audience they attract will be largely composed of readers of the Big Two's books. If that audience is made up of older readers who now buy a few comics, they may be all right.



© 1985 Donald Simpson

If they are hoping to hook younger readers though, they may be in trouble. After all, why shell out two bucks for a take-off of Marvel and DC when, for less money, you can buy two or three copies of the real thing? This pricing dilemma is a Catch-22 spiral the alternative publishers are caught in, and it's truly a shame. In my own experience, I've seen fans who would like to sample the work I've recommended—only to shake their heads and reluctantly reutrn it to the rack upon seeing its price tag. Thus we have a title like *Nexus* languishing in limbo for months, while *Secret Wars* racks up sales sufficient to buy Cleveland.

Regardless, if you have the bucks to spare, give *Megaton Man* a try. I think you'll find it to be a pleasure—even if you're so young that you think of 1962 as being part of ancient history.

LOVE IN FUR

OMAHA THE CAT DANCER #1
written and illustrated by
REED WALLER
Steeldragon Press
$1.60

If you are younger than 18—or whatever age society has arbitrarily decided makes you an "adult"—you might as well just skip over this review. Your conscientious comics shop dealer probably won't sell you a copy of *Omaha the Cat Dancer*.

I expected the book to be in the mold of the classic "Fritz the Cat"—that is, a funny animal story laden with all the common themes of life on derelict row: sex, drugs, and a freewheeling, somewhat anarchistic socio-political slant. Such was not the case, with the exception (which will be commented upon later).

While it is true that the characters inhabiting this book are indeed anthropomorphic animals, there is nothing funny about it. Omaha is an exotic dancer (read: stripper) who, with her boyfriend Chuck, is on the run, attempting to escape the murderous wrath of a big-time hood.

The two fugitives arrive in the very real city of San Francisco, where they spend the night in an apartment that just happens to be owned by Chuck's ex-girlfriend, Joanne. This portion of the book does conform to the image of the standard underground. It contains several explicit sex scenes (which, in a motion picture, would be termed "hard core"), culminating in a slightly drunken menage a trois. If you're offended by graphic depictions of sex, then don't even consider buying this book. I hold no such objections, and found the scenes to be quite well done, even erotic in a strange way (these are funny animals, after all).



© 1985 Reed Waller

If you have a desire to check out "Adult" comics, OMAHA THE CAT DANCER wouldn't be a bad place to start.

I couldn't help but reflect on the fact that if a shop owner did happen to sell this book to a minor, he would no doubt soon find himself faced with an angry parent returning the book and delivering a sound tongue lashing. Yet I daresay that there are no similar scenes enacted due to the purchase of the graphic gore and mindless violence of *The Omega Men* or *Vigilante*.

To me, it merely reinforces a rowing perception I have of a perverse sickness afflicting the collective mind of America. The fact which leads to the creation of life is condemned as being "dirty," unfit for youngsters, and—in the most appalling example of distorted values—somehow . . . unnatural. Conversely, the acts which lead to the extinction of life are deemed acceptable for mass consumption by all ages, as actions to be admired or even (a la *The A Team*) as fun. It is beyond my comprehension.

Actually, in the case of *Omaha*, the erotic scenes are far and away the highlight of the story, which in every other respect is a fairly standard crime drama of the sort that can be found any day on television. Omaha herself shows signs of being an interesting character, but we are not given enough here to really know for sure.

Reed Waller is a better penciller than one finds in many underground, with an understated style that fits the book fairly well. His work is pleasing to the eye, though this is one time when I think the monochrome art would have benefited greatly from the addition of color. For proof, one need only look at the nicely naughty cover illustration.

Omaha the Cat Dancer is not outstanding graphic storytelling, but if you have desire to check out "Adult" and/or underground comics, it wouldn't be a bad place to start.

FOOLS RUSH IN

BROTHER POWER THE GEEK SPECIAL #1
written by JOE SIMON
illustrated by JACK KIRBY
inked by JOHN TOTLEBEN
colored by ADRIENNE ROY
edited by ROY THOMAS

COMICS IN REVIEW

DC Comics
$1.25

The Edsel of comic book series is probably the original *Brother Power the Geek*. An attempt to cash in on the hippie movement it was written and drawn by Joe Simon, who was certainly "with it" when he co-created (with Jack Kirby) Captain America and a slew of other comic book heroes. Thirty years later, however, he proved to know as much about teenagers as I do about astrophysics: zilch. As a result, the series ran for a grand total of two issues.

That was the end of the story until now. Roy Thomas, preparing anfother of his repertory annuals for *All-Star Squadron*, sought to entice Simon and Kirby into collaborating once again, on a chapter which would spotlight one of their Golden Age creations, the Manhunter. Instead, Simon expressed an interest in reviving Brother Power, convinced that this time he could make it work. More importantly, he convinced Thomas.

For the multitudes who don't know, Brother Power began as nothing more than a tailor's dummy. Brought to life by a bolt of lightning, he joined a band of hippies, who taught him to speak and sent him to school. It is obvious that the intervening years have seen great changes occur in Brother Power's lifestyle.

When we first see him again, he is sporting a three-piece suit, and sitting behind a massive desk. It seems that the being once displayed in a circus as The Geek made his way to California's Silicon Valley where he proceeded to amass a fortune in the field of home computers and video games. He is now a respected member of the community, a member of the Chamber of Commerce, a husband, and father of 2.3 children. The Geek has gone normal.

Now, approaching middle-age, he becomes discontent. He sells his company, leaves his family, and retreats to the mountains of Nepal, seeking spiritual enlightenment. He is a changed man when he returns six months later. With messianic zeal, he begins a solitary crusade, preaching that mankind's sole hope for salvation lies in complete mutual nuclear destruction. Disenchanted Americans flock to his banner, and so great does his popularity become that he at last announces he will seek to become President—promising that five minutes after he is sworn into office he will launch every weapon in our vast nuclear arsenal, at friend and foe alike. I won't divulge the outcome of his campaign.

In what could well be the sleeper of the year, Joe Simon has completely redeemed himself for the earliest catastrophic failure of Brother Power. Totally out of step with what was happening in 1968, today he is sharply attuned to the fatalistic despair plaguing many Americans. As a result, he has scripted a tale both frightening in its implications and timely in its pronouncements.

Jack Kirby, perhaps inspired by his old partner, has turned in his finest work in years. Gone are his standard square heads, noses, and fingers; yet the dynamic style that was always his trademark is still prominent. Helping tremendously is inker John Totleben, best known for his work on Swamp *Thing*. Kirby personally selected Totleben as his embellisher—his wisest move since the days when he worked with Joe Simnott. Totleben gives him the strong support he has been lacking from recent inkers. So powerful is the art that even the ever-abominable flexographic process cannot diminish its impact.

Strange as it may seem, comicdom's biggest joke has now become the most startling and bone-chilling representation of the Nuclear Age. This book is guaranteed to leave you shaking. *Brother Power the Geek* may well be the most significant comic of the decade. Miss it at your peril. ●



STORES SURVEYED FOR THE TOP 100:

NOTE: The following stores provided sales information from which AH's Top 100 was compiled.

A Little Bookstore
529 E. Camelback, Phoenix AZ 85012

Apollo Records
P.O. Box 3, Buffalo, NY 14216

Art Moods Cards & Comics
1058 Mistletoe Rd., Decatur, GA 30033

B&D Comic Shop
3514 Williamson Rd., Roanoke, VA 24012

Beetle Enterprises
5814 Allentown Way, Temple Hills, MD 20748

Bill & Bob's Comic Shop
362 94th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11209

The Book Broker
2127 S. Weinbach Ave., Evansville IN 47714

Book Stop
384 E. Meadow Lane, East Meadow NY 11554

Book Swap
110 South Fraser Street, State College, PA 16801

Bookle Parlor
2920 Wayne Ave., Dayton, OH 45420

Classy Comics and Collectibles
3319 Sutherland Ave., Knoxville TN 37919

Collector's Comics
1971 Wantagh Ave., Wantagh, NY 11793

Colorado Comics
304 E. Colfax, Denver, CO 80203

The Comic Connection
22 Oneawa St., Kalua, HI 96734

The Comic Shop
1865 Forest Ave., Staten Island, NY 10303

Comic Zone
1150 W. Main, Lewisville, TX 75067

Comics & Characters
3217-B Niles St., Bakersfield CA 93306

Comics for Collectors
(1) 148 The Commons, Ithaca, NY 14850
(2) 211 W. Water St., Elmira, NY 14901

Comics for Heroes
1702 West Foster, Chicago, IL 60640

Comics Hawaii-Maui
1728 Kaahumanu Ave., Wailuku, HI 96793

Comics 'Nuff Said
(1) 1500 Central Ave., Charlotte, NC 28205
(2) 1930 Main St., Columbia, SC 29201

Comics Plus
328 7th Ave., Brooklyn NY 11215

Comics Plus—Hadley
Rte. 9, Hampshire Mall, Hadley, MA 01035

The Comics Trip
Midtown Mall, Brattleboro, VT 05301

Comics Utah
(1) 1956 S. 1100 E., Salt Lake City, UT 84105
(2) 5488 S. 4220 W. Kearns, UT 8411B

Cosmic Comics
26 Colonial Arcade, Cleveland OH 44115

Cosmix
11819 Laurentien, Montreal, PQ, Canada, H4J 2M1

Crusader's Comics
284 Queen Anne Rd., Teaneck, NJ 07666

Discount Comic Book Shop
909 Noble Street, Anniston, AL 36201

Family Books and Comics
101 Transcontinental, Metairie LA 70001

Fantasm
(1) 2366 A Yonge St., Toronto, Ontario Canada M4P 2E6
(2) 230 Markham Road, Scarborough, Ontario Canada M1J 3C2

The Fantastic Store
160 New Dorp Ln., Staten Island, NY 10306

First Edition
653 10th Street, Brandon, R7A 4G6, Canada

Fortune Bookie
7032 Greenleaf, Whittier CO 90602

Future Dreams
(1) 1800 East Burnside, Portland, OR 97214
(2) 8116 SE Oak, Portland, OR 97215

Gem Comics
112 A N. York Road, Elmhurst, IL 60126

Golden Apple Comics
7753 Melrose Avenue, Los Angeles CA 90040

Heroes Aren't Hard to Find
(1) 133½ East Franklin Street #211, Chapel Hill, NC 27514
(2) (Shop & subservice) 1214 Thomas Ave., Charlotte, NC 28205
(3) 1003 Brookstown Ave., Winston Salem, NC 27101

Hooked on Books
206 W. Whitewater St., Whitewater, WI 53190

Metropolis
119 Hal Mudrow Drive, Norman, OK 73069

Moondog's
139 Prospect Ave., Mount Prospect, IL

New Mythology
1725 Broadway, Boise, ID 83706

Past Present and Future
1348 W. Lantana Rd., Lantana, FL 33462

Pike's Peak Books and Comics
3307 N. Academy Blvd., Colorado Springs, CO 80907

Read B-4 Bookstore
624 Main Street, Lafayette, IN 47905

Recycled Records and Comics
1419 University Ave., Charlottesville VA 22903

River City Cards and Comics
115 South 5th Street Suite C, LaCrosse, WI 54601

Rodney's Compleat Bookshop
144 S. Water, Kent, OH 44240

St. Marks Comix
11 St. Marks, New York NY 10003

Star Comics, Inc.
5802 Stirling Rd., Hollywood, FL 33021

The Twilight Book and Game Emporium
1411 North Salina St., Syracuse NY 13208

Unicorn Comics
33 Simcoe St. N., Oshawa Ontario Canada L1G 4R9

Wilkie's Wonderful World of Comics, Coins, Cards & Books
2398 Robie Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, B3K 4M7

If you own a store and want to participate in the **AH** *"Top 100" Survey, write to us c/o "Top 100," AMAZING HEROES, 707 Camino Manzanas Thousand Oaks, CA 91360*

top 100

The list is for the titles that went on sale in November. The number given at the end of each listing is the average number of copies of the comic sold per store.

1. (1) **Secret Wars #11** — 216.2
2. (2) **X-Men #191** — 160.7
3. (3) **Kitty and Wolverine #5** — 140.2
4. (---) **Who's Who #1** — 111.3
5. (5) **Alpha Flight #20** — 110.0
6. (6) **Amazing Spider-Man #262** — 101.7
7. (7) **New Mutants #25** — 101.4
8. (15) **Peter Parker #100** — 101.3
9. (10) **Fantastic Four #276** — 97.2
10. (12) **Thor #353** — 96.9

11. (9) **New Teen Titans #6** — 92.7
12. (11) **Tales of the Teen Titans #51** — 81.7
13. (17) **Iron Man #192** — 79.1
14. (16) **Avengers #253** — 71.6
15. (---) **G.I. Joe Yearbook #1** — 68.1
16. (21) **Transformers #4** — 59.7
17. (19) **Daredevil #216** — 58.2
18. (---) **Groo #1** — 53.6
19. (20) **G.I. Joe #33** — 52.6
20. (21) **The Thing #21** — 51.3

21. (---) **V #1** — 51.0
22. (**) **Legion of Super-Heroes #8** — 47.8
23. (23) **Power Pack #8** — 47.6
24. (22) **Legion of Super-Heroes #7** — 46.2
25. (25) **Captain America #303** — 44.7
26. (23) **Dreadstar #16** — 43.8
27. (28) **Defenders #141** — 43.0
28. (31) **Rom #64** — 41.8
29. (36) **Batman and the Outsiders #19** — 41.2
30. (30) **Tales of the Legion of Super-Heroes #320** — 40.0

31. (29) **Incredible Hulk #305** — 39.3
32. (26) **America Vs. The JSA #5** — 38.3
33. (32) **Micronauts #6** — 37.1
34. (27) **Superman: The Secret Years #2** — 36.5
35. (40) **Blue Devil #10** — 34.7
36. (37) **Star Trek #12** — 34.0
37. (36) **Vigilante #15** — 34.0
38. (58) **Swamp Thing #34** — 33.7
39. (45) **American Flagg! #18** — 33.5
40. (39) **Infinity, Inc. #11** — 31.7

41. (48) **Conan #168** — 30.2
42. (**) **Jon Sable, Freelance #22** — 30.1
43. (49) **Justice League of America #236** — 29.7
44. (45) **Conan the King #27** — 29.1
45. (46) **Dazzler #36** — 28.3
46. (51) **Jon Sable, Freelance #21** — 28.3
47. (52) **Grimjack #8** — 27.9
48. (57) **Star Wars #93** — 27.7
49. (43) **Dr. Who #5** — 27.6
50. (67) **Batman #381** — 27.0

51. (55) **Fury of Firestorm #33** — 27.0
52. (---) **Wally Wood's T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents #1** — 26.4
53. (53) **Barren Earth #2** — 25.5
54. (66) **Atari Force #15** — 25.2

55. (77) **Warlord #91** — 25.2
56. (76) **Red Sonja #7** — 24.6
57. (74) **Power Man/Iron Fist #115** — 24.2
58. (**) **Judge Dredd #16** — 23.7
59. (62) **Spanner's Galaxy #3** — 23.6
 (42) **Time Spirits #2** — 23.6

61. (75) **Detective #547** — 23.6
62. (69) **All-Star Squadron #42** —23.1
63. (60) **Omega Men #23** — 23.0
64. (72) **Judge Dredd #15** — 22.9
65. (73) **Indiana Jones #27** — 22.8
66. (65) **Jemm #7** — 22.5
67. (70) **Amethyst #3** — 21.8
68. (---) **Supergirl Movie Special #1** — 21.6
69. (71) **Marvel Tales #173** — 21.1
70. (43) **Alien Worlds #8** — 21.0

71. (70) **Conan the Destroyer #2** — 20.0
72. (80) **Sun Devils #8** — 19.8
73. (82) **Flash #343** — 19.5
74. (88) **Crash Ryan #4** — 19.0
75. (79) **Savage Sword of Conan #109** — 18.6
76. (---) **Strange Days #1** — 18.5
77. (85) **DC Presents #79** — 18.0
78. (71) **The P.I.'s #2** — 17.9
79. (87) **Superman #405** — 17.6
80. (86) **Starslayer #26** — 16.6

81. (92) **Nemesis #5** — 16.0
82. (83) **Berni Wrightson, Master of the Macabre #5** — 15.9
83. (76) **Mr. X #2** — 15.4
84. (---) **Starstruck Graphic Novel** — 15.1
85. (83) **Aeon #564** — 15.0
86. (85) **DNAgents #16** — 14.5
87. (94) **Arion #28** — 14.4
88. (**) **Nemesis #6** — 14.3
89. (88) **Robo-Hunter #4** — 13.6
90. (97) **World's Finest #312** — 13.0

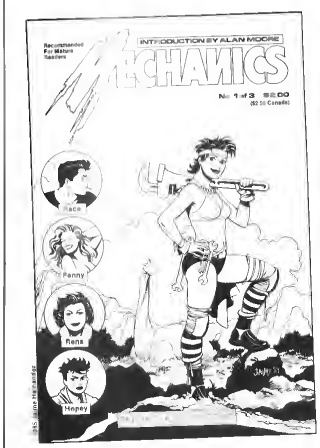
91. (87) **Aztec Ace #7** — 12.8
92. (88) **Surge #3** — 12.4
93. (**) **Robo-Hunter #5** — 12.0
94. (99) **Arak #42** — 11.5
95. (92) **Zot! #6** — 10.9
96. (---) **Funny Stuff Special #1** — 10.8
97. (92) **Warp #19** — 10.6
98. (100) **Crossfire #6** — 10.1
99. (**) **New Talent Showcase #15** —9.4
100. (**) **Ms. Tree #13** — 9.0

Titles which were listed in the survey but did not make the Top 100 include Best of DC Digest, The First Kingdom, G.I. Combat, Jonah Hex, *RAW* One-Shot, Sgt. Rock, Swords of Cerebus, Stig's Inferno, Vortex, *all Archie Comics, all Fantagraphics Books titles, and all other fanzines*

The best-selling titles of the following companies were:

Marvel	*(1)*	**Secret Wars #11**
DC	(4)	**Who's Who #1**
First	(38)	**American Flagg! #18**
Deluxe	(52)	**Wally Wood's T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents #1**
Eclipse	(70)	**Alien Worlds #8**





ATTENTION RETAILERS

6 REASONS WHY THESE TWO MAY RELEASES ARE HOT!

1 ***MECHANICS #1*** presents in color for the first time "Mechanics" a now out-of-print (and hard-to find) story that in 1984 was nominated for the prestigious British Eagle award for best story—alongside such favorites as *American Flagg!*

2 ***DALGODA*** has been one of the most consistently back-ordered titles of the alternative press. Fantagraphics Books has just sold out the second issue, *which was originally overprinted by over one third above orders from distributors*—and every retailer we've talked to reports increased sales and interest from his customers.

3 ***MECHANICS #1*** features two *brand new* stories and a breathtaking new cover by the sensational JAIME HERNANDEZ, and an introduction by stellar fan-favorite ALAN MOORE—and, and the second issue will feature an introduction by CHRIS CLAREMONT!

4 In April, ***DALGODA*** and ***MECHANICS*** will be supported by a massive ad campaign, including full-color back-cover advertisements on comics released by Eclipse, First Comics, Vortex, and others—as well as extensive advertising in the fan press.

5 ***MECHANICS*** is spun off from the popular *Love and Rockets* series, which is receiving unprecedented media attention—including a big front-page article in the Los Angeles *Herald Examiner's* "Style" section, and a major segment on CBS's hit show *Two on the Town*.

6 **And in May, both *MECHANICS* and *DALGODA* will be promoted by the largest retailer plastic bag promotion ever done in comics: Over *one million* bags, adorned with beautiful illustrations from the two series, will be distributed at a penny apiece ($5.00 for each box of 500) to retail stores across the country. If you haven't ordered any from your distributor yet, hurry—he may still have some left!**

Dalgoda #6 The climax of "Dalgoda Come Home," by JAN STRNAD, DENNIS FUJITAKE and KENNETH SMITH. Plus "Grimwood's Daughter" by STRNAD, KEVIN NOWLAN, and SMITH. Cover by FUJITAKE. back cover by NOWLAN. $2.00. 31 pages of full color comics. Shipping in the last week of May from Ronald's.

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